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SOCIAL MEDIA

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE WISH THEY'D KNOWN ABOUT IT, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

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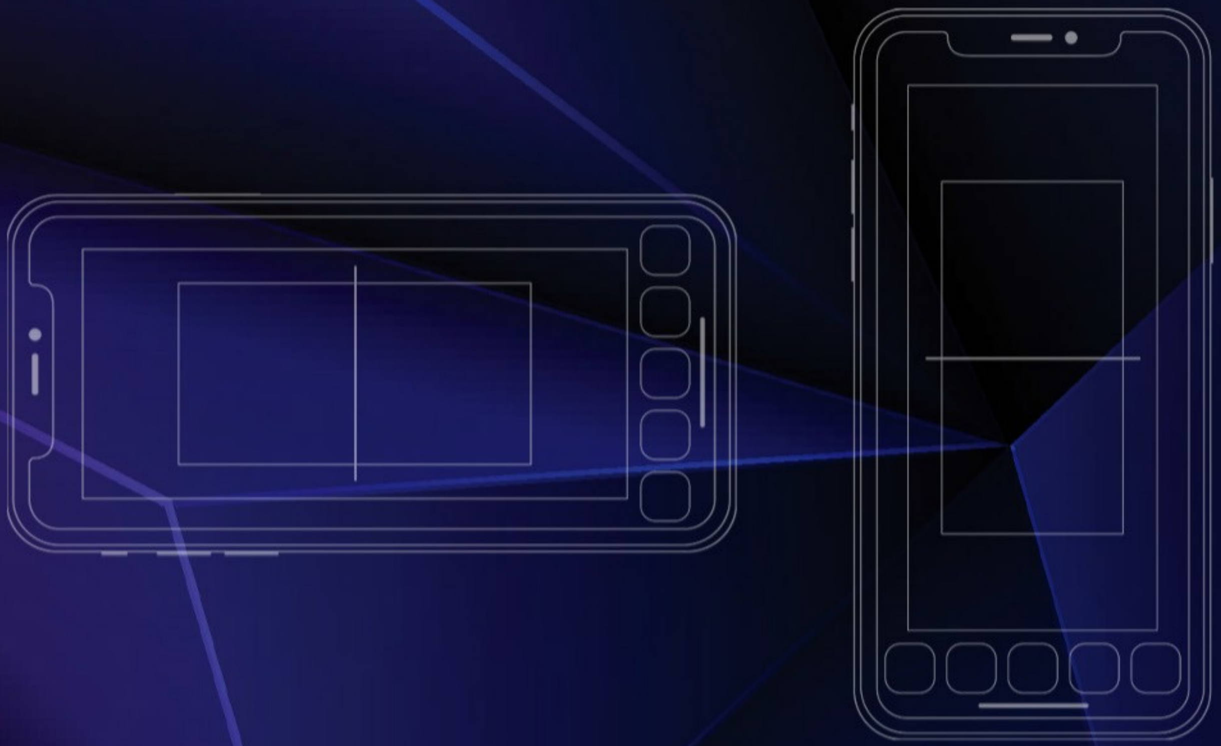

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A REALISTIC WAY TO PROTECT KIDS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA? FIND A MIDDLE GROUND

Ahmed Othman isn't on TikTok and doesn't want to be.

He and his younger sister got iPhones when they were in eighth and seventh grade respectively, but with no social media, just iMessage. Their parents, who are both computer scientists, spent the next year teaching them about social media, bombarding them with studies about its effects on teen mental health.

"They really tried to emphasize social media is a tool, but can also be like your worst enemy if you so make it," Othman said.

Image: Richard Drew

Now 17, Othman credits his parents' deep involvement for what he calls a "healthy relationship" with his phone. That includes staying away from TikTok.

"The algorithm is so potent that I feel like, you know, TikTok might not benefit me," he said.

Othman, who's originally from Libya and lives in Massachusetts, is an outlier among his peers, nearly two-thirds of whom are on TikTok either with or without their parents' permission, according to the Pew Research Center.

Othman's parents took a middle ground approach that a growing number of experts say is the most realistic and effective way of teaching children about social media: Rather than an outright ban or allowing free reign, they recommend a slow, deliberate onboarding that gives children the tools and information they need to navigate a world in which places like TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat are almost impossible to escape.

"You cannot just expect that the kids will jump into the world of social media, learn how to swim on their own," said Natalie Bazarova, a professor of communications and director of the Cornell Social Media Lab. "They need to have instruction. They need to have practice on how to behave on social media. They need to have understanding of risks and opportunities. And they also need to learn that in a way that is age appropriate."

FEW GUARDRAILS

The harms to children from social media have been well-documented in the two decades since Facebook's launch ushered in a new era in how

Image: Richard Drew

the world communicates. Kids who spend more time on social media, especially when they are tweens or young teenagers, are more likely to experience depression and anxiety, according to multiple studies — though it is not yet clear if there is a causal relationship.

Many are exposed to content that is not appropriate for their age, including pornography and violence. They also face bullying, sexual harassment and unwanted advances from their peers as well as adult strangers. Because their brains are not fully developed, teenagers are also more affected by social comparisons than adults, so even happy posts from friends could send them into a negative spiral.

Lawmakers have taken notice and have held multiple congressional hearings — most recently in January — on child online safety. Still, the last federal law aimed at protecting children online was enacted in 1998, six years before Facebook's founding.

Last May, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy issued a warning saying there is not enough evidence to show that social media is safe for kids and urged policymakers to address the harms of social media the same way they regulate things like car seats, baby formula, medication and other products children use. Parents, he stressed, can't do it all, although some — like Othman's — try.

Othman at first wanted a phone "with everything on it, no restrictions."

"But like now, after the years passed, I really do understand and appreciate what they did," he said.

Image: Richard Drew

WHEN IT'S NOT ENOUGH

Of course, the Othmans' approach may not work for every family. Most parents are not computer scientists, and many don't have the time or expertise to create a crash-course on social media for their children.

But even when parents are vigilant, that's still no guarantee their children won't fall prey to social media's traps.

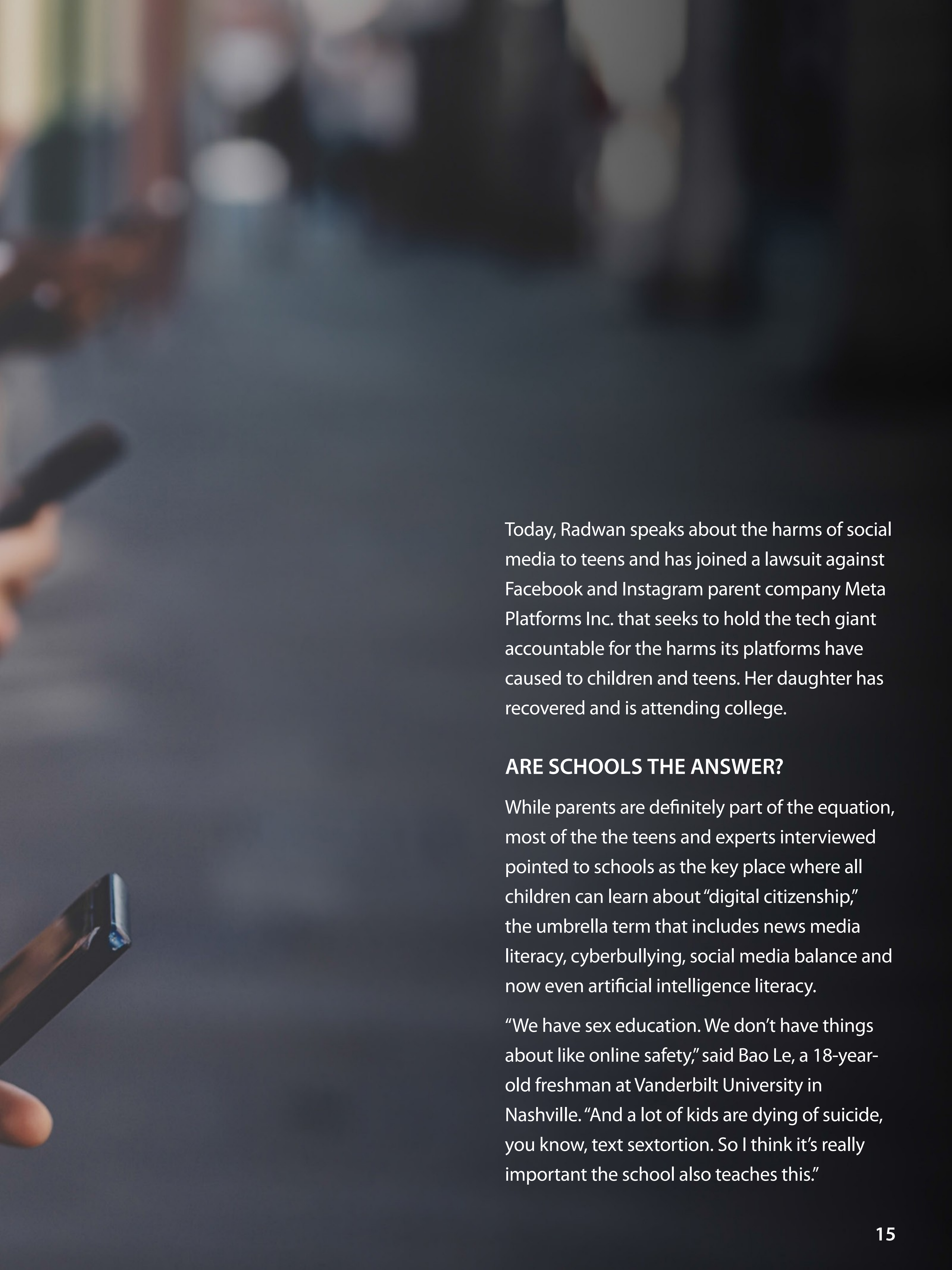
Neveen Radwan thought she did everything right when she gave her children phones: putting restrictions on their accounts, having access to their passwords, taking away their phones at night, setting everything to private.

"I made sure that everything was very, very, you know, airtight," said Radwan, who worked in information technology for 20 years.

Her daughter didn't get a phone until she was 13. She started using social media in the eighth grade. When she was 16, she was diagnosed with anorexia.

"We were right in the beginning of (the COVID lockdowns) and it progressed very quickly because we were at home and she was on social media quite a bit at the time," Radwan recalled.

An avid athlete, the teen started looking for workouts and ways to stay healthy on Instagram. Soon, though, the algorithm began showing her social media challenges like "how to stay under 500 calories a day" and "if you want to stay skinny, you need to be able to fit in a baby swing." Within two or three months, Radwan said her daughter was in the hospital.



Today, Radwan speaks about the harms of social media to teens and has joined a lawsuit against Facebook and Instagram parent company Meta Platforms Inc. that seeks to hold the tech giant accountable for the harms its platforms have caused to children and teens. Her daughter has recovered and is attending college.

ARE SCHOOLS THE ANSWER?

While parents are definitely part of the equation, most of the the teens and experts interviewed pointed to schools as the key place where all children can learn about "digital citizenship," the umbrella term that includes news media literacy, cyberbullying, social media balance and now even artificial intelligence literacy.

"We have sex education. We don't have things about like online safety," said Bao Le, a 18-year-old freshman at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. "And a lot of kids are dying of suicide, you know, text sextortion. So I think it's really important the school also teaches this."

But while some schools offer digital literacy or online safety programs, these are still few and far between. Teachers already face pressure to teach the regular curriculum while also dealing with staffing shortages and funding issues. Not only that, but kids are often encouraged to be on social media if they want to participate in extracurricular activities and other school programs.

Some schools opt to ban phones altogether, but just as with parental bans, kids often find a way. For instance, at schools that collect the gadgets from kids in the morning, students say they get around it by turning in fake phones. To get around parental bans, they set up social media accounts on friends' phones, computers or buy burner phones to keep using after they have turned in their official phone.

"Hope is not a strategy. And pretending that (social media) doesn't exist is also not a strategy, because we have to deal with real life," said Merve Lapus, vice president of education outreach at the nonprofit Common Sense Media, whose digital citizenship curriculum is used in more than 90,000 schools in the U.S. "Our kids are being exposed to it in some shape or form. They're hearing about it with their friends. The pressure to feel connected has not changed. I mean, these are all pressures we felt as kids."

To really connect with kids, he said, it's best to get deeper into the pressures they face when it comes to social media, and validate that those are real pressures.

"I think that's one of the challenges right now, is that it becomes the center of attention only when it's problematic," Lapus said. "And so we frame these tools as only problematic tools very easily, very quickly, and our kids will say, you just don't get it, I can't talk to you about these things because you don't understand."

NONPROFITS STEP UP

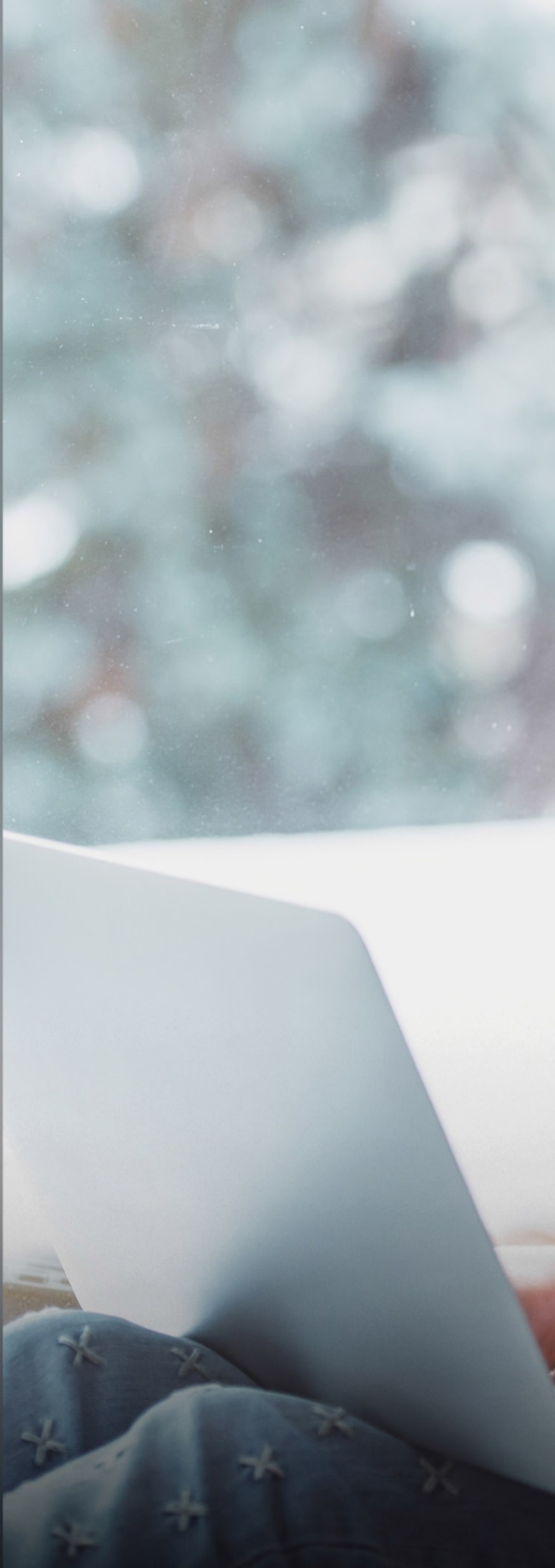
Over the past decade or so, nonprofits and advocacy groups — many run by young people who emerged from their own struggles with social media — have popped up to offer help.

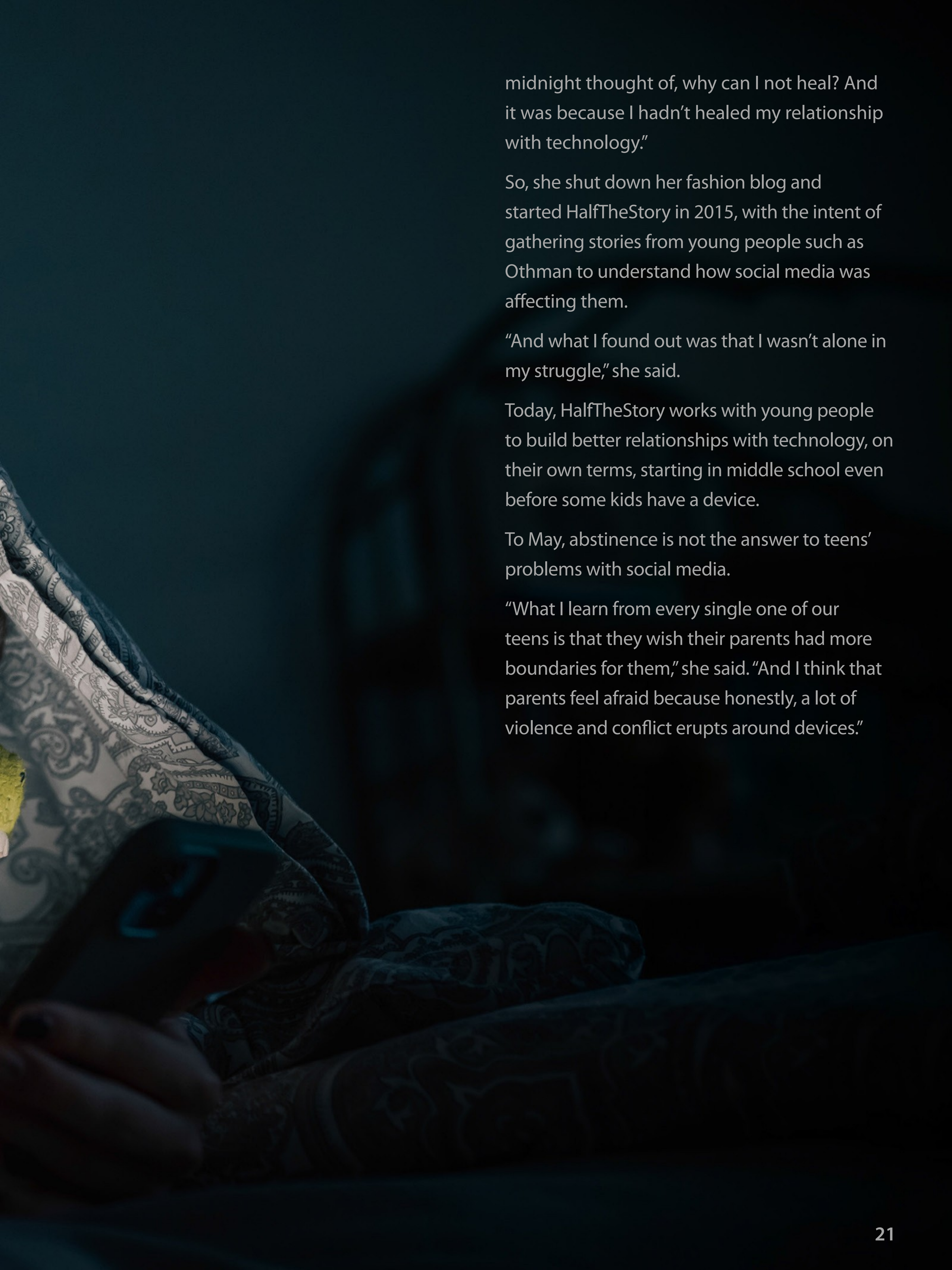
Larissa May stumbled on to social media a decade ago when she was in high school "without any roadmap" on its dangers or how to use it. May said she was dealing with depression and anxiety that social media exacerbated. In college, she became "obsessed" with social media and digital marketing, running a fashion blog where she was posting on every day.

"I got to a point where I was spending 12-plus hours a day on my phone in my room, more focused on my digital identity than the world around me, my mental health, my physical health, my sleep," May recalled. She almost took her own life.

The turning point came when May started going to a psychiatrist almost every day, with clear instructions of what she needed to do: Take antidepressants, start moving her body sleep, and start socializing.

"However, I was spending all of my day on my phone, which they never addressed, and being on my phone prevented me from doing all of those things," May said. "And it wasn't until one day where I had this, you know,





midnight thought of, why can I not heal? And it was because I hadn't healed my relationship with technology."

So, she shut down her fashion blog and started HalfTheStory in 2015, with the intent of gathering stories from young people such as Othman to understand how social media was affecting them.

"And what I found out was that I wasn't alone in my struggle," she said.

Today, HalfTheStory works with young people to build better relationships with technology, on their own terms, starting in middle school even before some kids have a device.

To May, abstinence is not the answer to teens' problems with social media.

"What I learn from every single one of our teens is that they wish their parents had more boundaries for them," she said. "And I think that parents feel afraid because honestly, a lot of violence and conflict erupts around devices."

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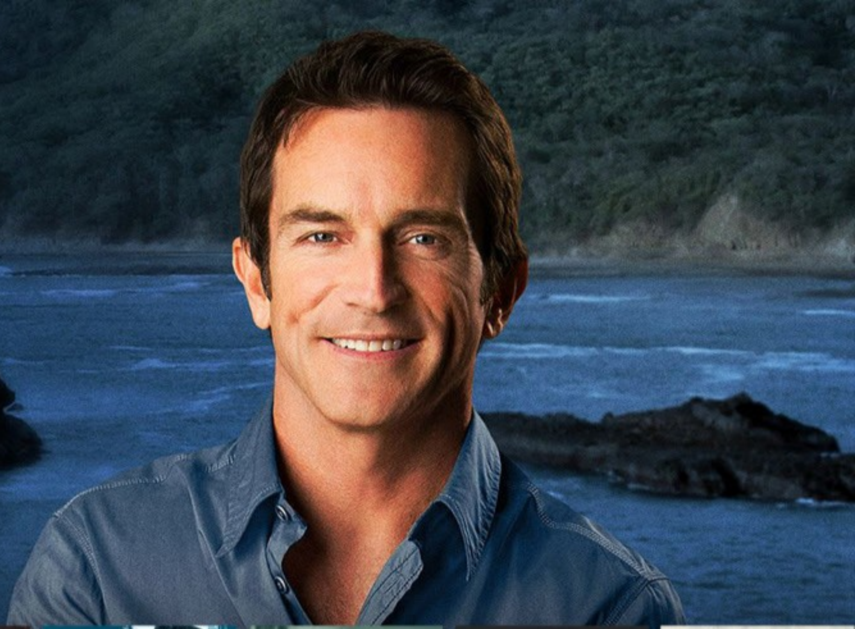

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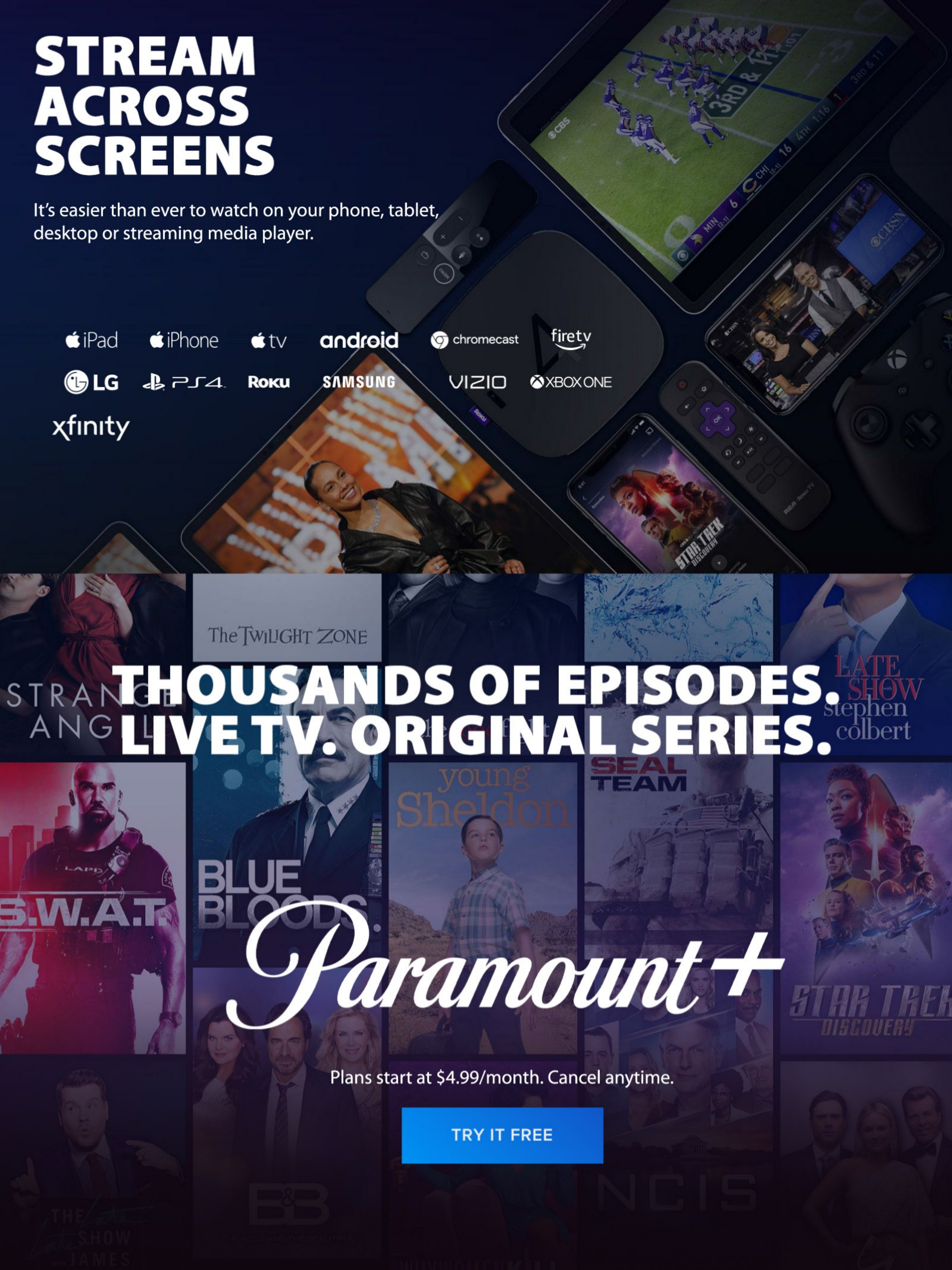

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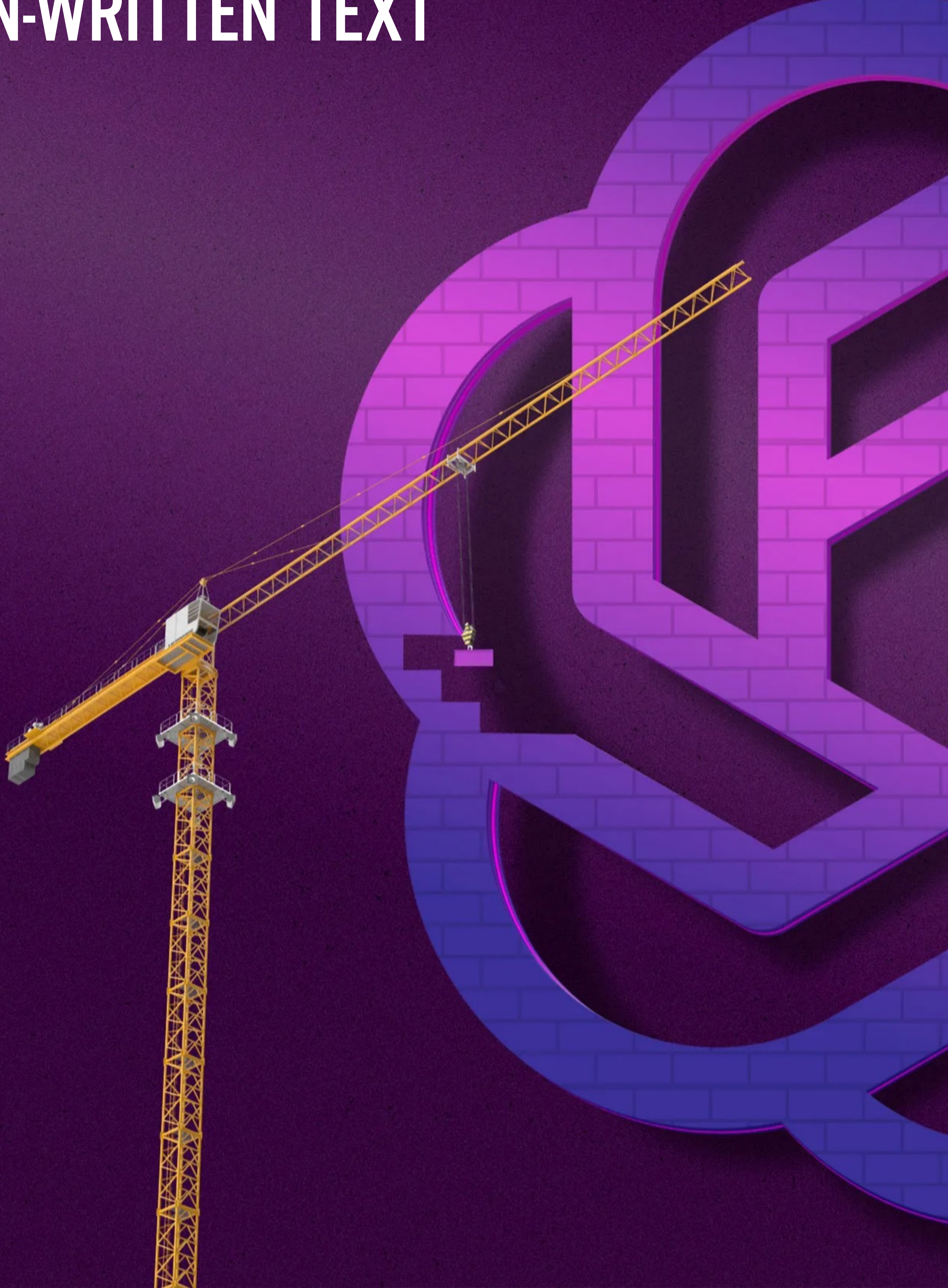
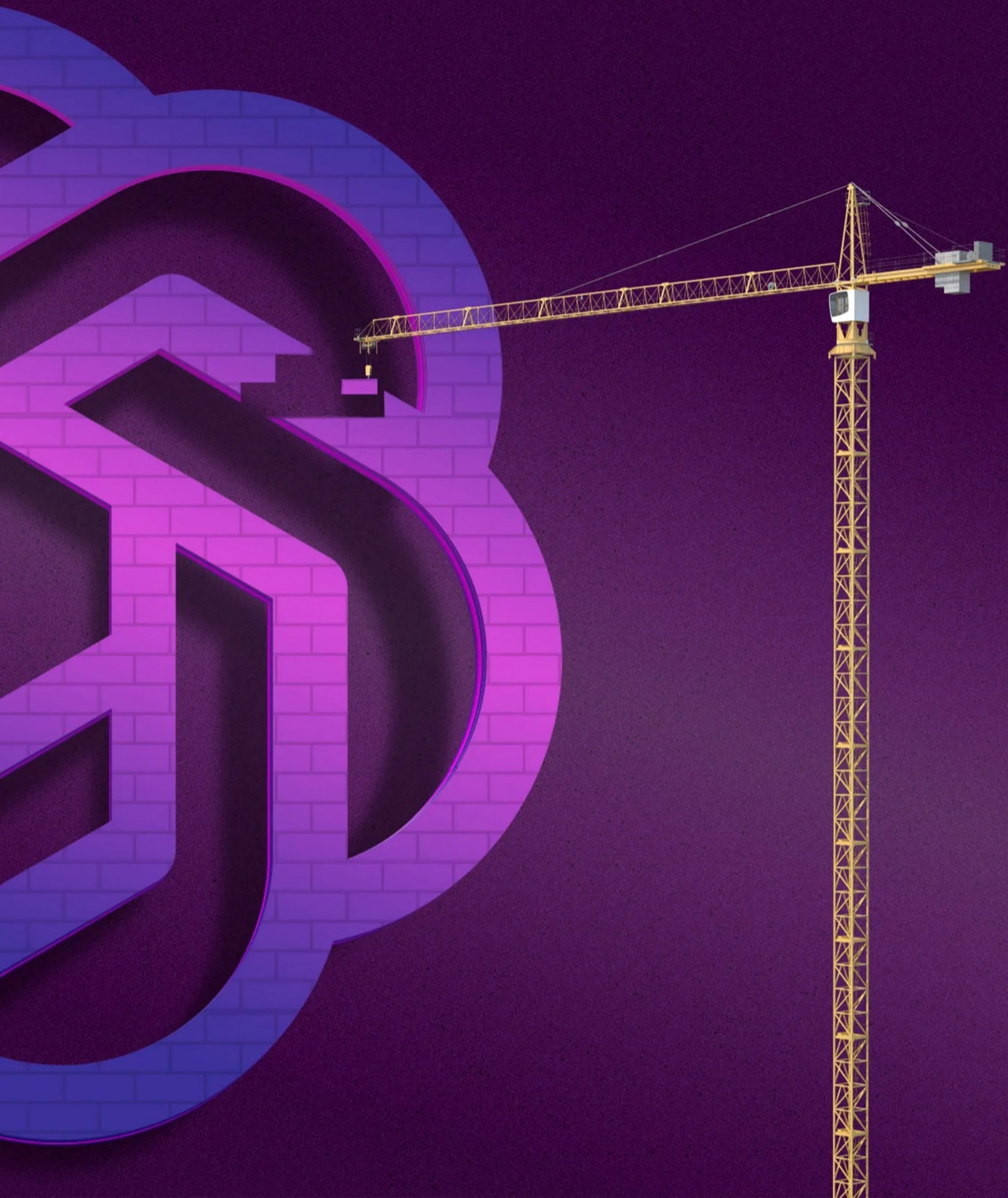
AI ‘GOLD RUSH’ FOR CHATBOT TRAINING DATA COULD RUN OUT OF HUMAN-WRITTEN TEXT





Artificial intelligence systems like ChatGPT could soon run out of what keeps making them smarter — the tens of trillions of words people have written and shared online.

A new study released Thursday by research group Epoch AI projects that tech companies will exhaust the supply of publicly available training data for AI language models by roughly the turn of the decade -- sometime between 2026 and 2032.

Comparing it to a “literal gold rush” that depletes finite natural resources, Tamay Besiroglu, an author of the study, said the AI field might face challenges in maintaining its current pace of progress once it drains the reserves of human-generated writing.

AI

In the short term, tech companies like ChatGPT-maker OpenAI and Google are racing to secure and sometimes pay for high-quality data sources to train their AI large language models – for instance, by signing deals to tap into the steady flow of sentences coming out of Reddit forums and news media outlets.

In the longer term, there won't be enough new blogs, news articles and social media commentary to sustain the current trajectory of AI development, putting pressure on companies to tap into sensitive data now considered private — such as emails or text messages — or relying on less-reliable "synthetic data" spit out by the chatbots themselves.

"There is a serious bottleneck here," Besiroglu said. "If you start hitting those constraints about how much data you have, then you can't really scale up your models efficiently anymore. And scaling up models has been probably the most important way of expanding their capabilities and improving the quality of their output."

The researchers first made their projections two years ago — shortly before ChatGPT's debut — in a working paper that forecast a more imminent 2026 cutoff of high-quality text data. Much has changed since then, including new techniques that enabled AI researchers to make better use of the data they already have and sometimes "overtrain" on the same sources multiple times.

But there are limits, and after further research, Epoch now foresees running out of public text data sometime in the next two to eight years.

The team's latest study is peer-reviewed and due to be presented at this summer's International

Conference on Machine Learning in Vienna, Austria. Epoch is a nonprofit institute hosted by San Francisco-based Rethink Priorities and funded by proponents of effective altruism — a philanthropic movement that has poured money into mitigating AI's worst-case risks.

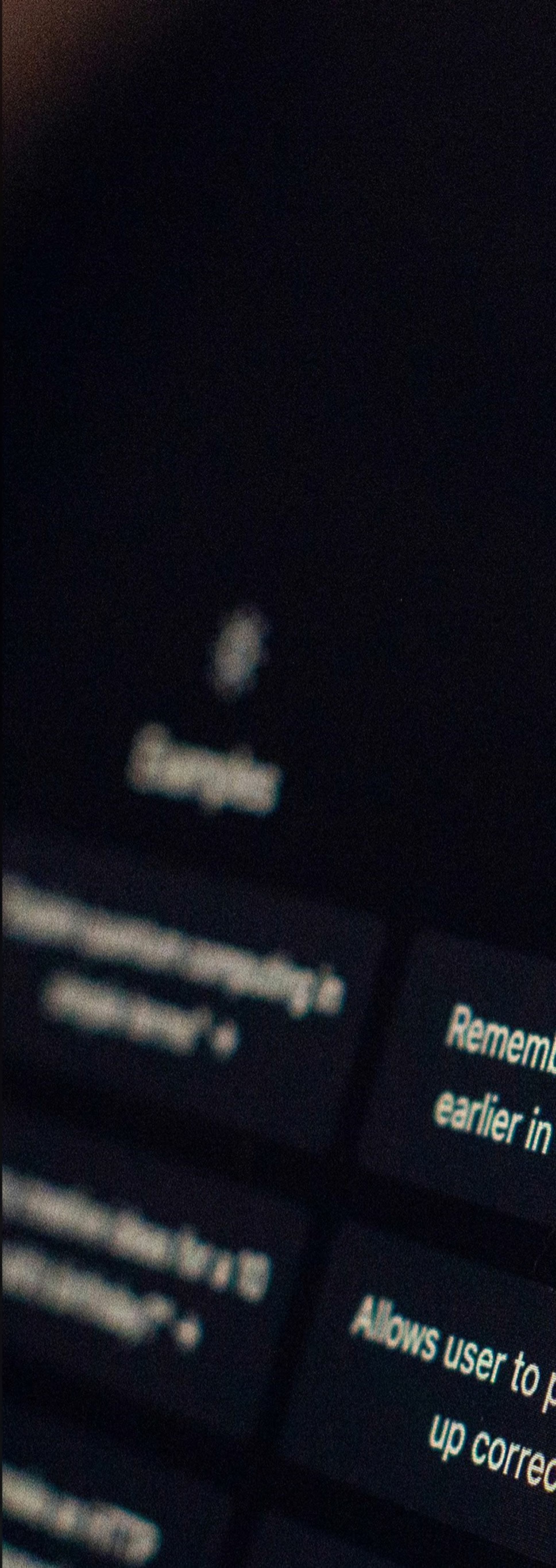
Besiroglu said AI researchers realized more than a decade ago that aggressively expanding two key ingredients — computing power and vast stores of internet data — could significantly improve the performance of AI systems.

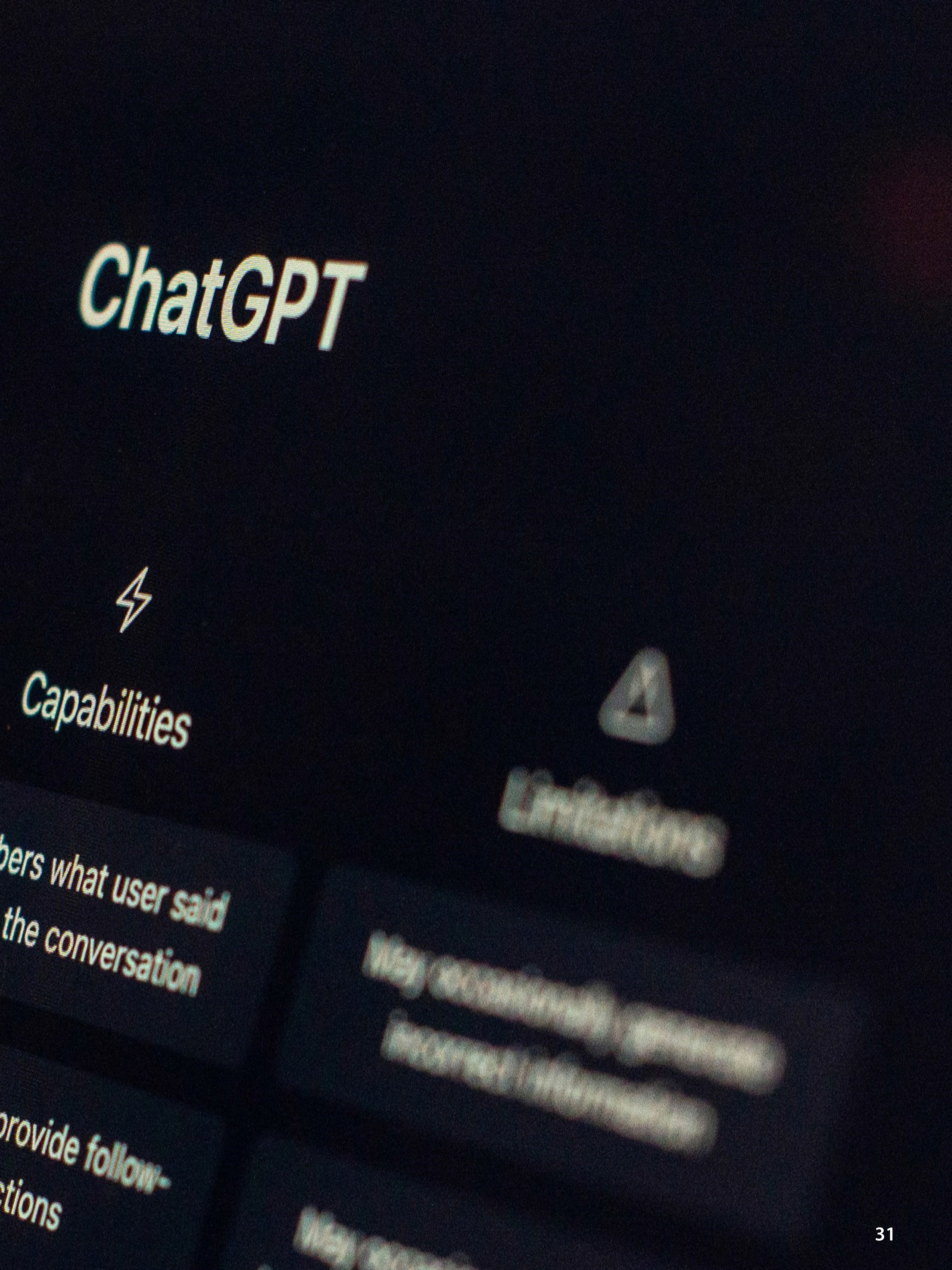
The amount of text data fed into AI language models has been growing about 2.5 times per year, while computing has grown about 4 times per year, according to the Epoch study. Facebook parent company Meta Platforms recently claimed the largest version of their upcoming Llama 3 model — which has not yet been released — has been trained on up to 15 trillion tokens, each of which can represent a piece of a word.

But how much it's worth worrying about the data bottleneck is debatable.

"I think it's important to keep in mind that we don't necessarily need to train larger and larger models," said Nicolas Papernot, an assistant professor of computer engineering at the University of Toronto and researcher at the nonprofit Vector Institute for Artificial Intelligence.

Papernot, who was not involved in the Epoch study, said building more skilled AI systems can also come from training models that are more specialized for specific tasks. But he has concerns about training generative AI systems on the same outputs they're producing, leading to degraded performance known as "model collapse."

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Training on AI-generated data is "like what happens when you photocopy a piece of paper and then you photocopy the photocopy. You lose some of the information," Papernot said. Not only that, but Papernot's research has also found it can further encode the mistakes, bias and unfairness that's already baked into the information ecosystem.

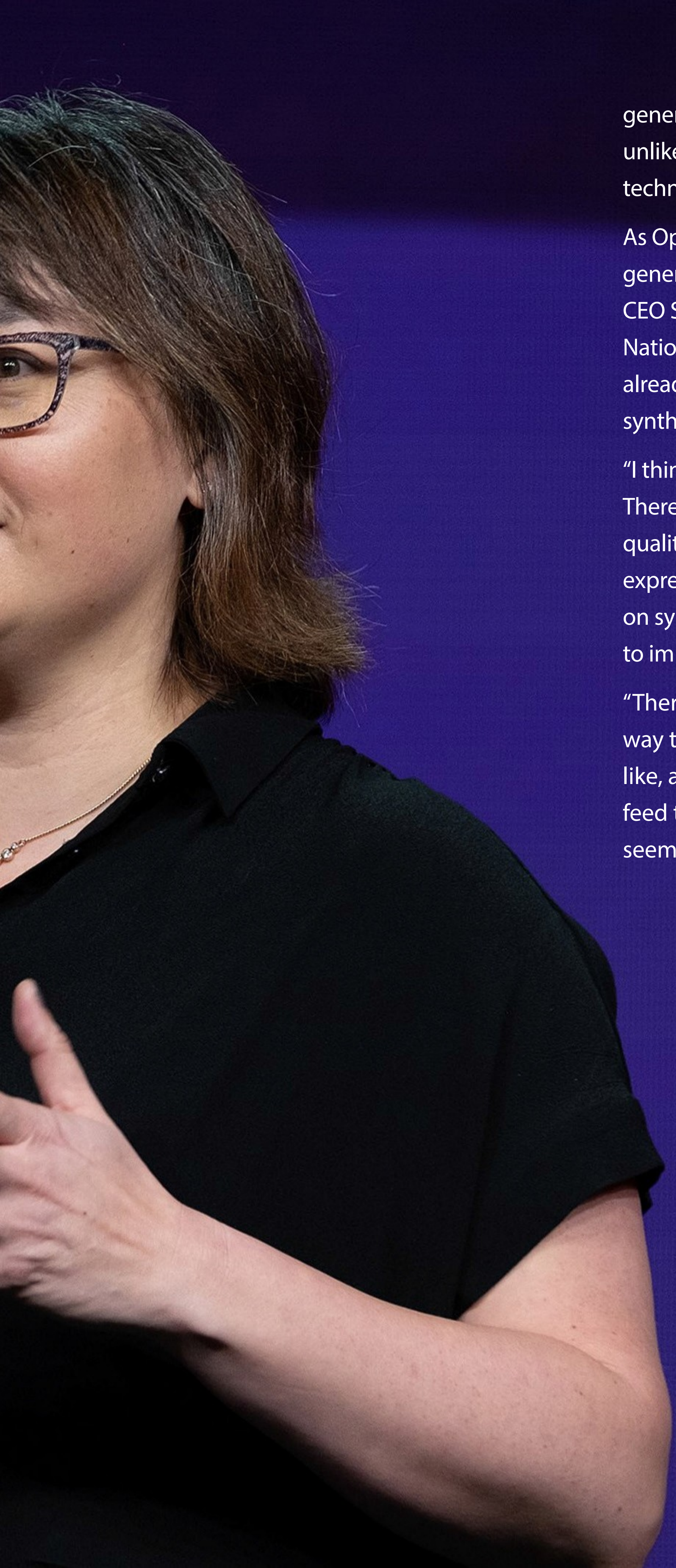
If real human-crafted sentences remain a critical AI data source, those who are stewards of the most sought-after troves — websites like Reddit and Wikipedia, as well as news and book publishers — have been forced to think hard about how they're being used.

"Maybe you don't lop off the tops of every mountain," jokes Selena Deckelmann, chief product and technology officer at the Wikimedia Foundation, which runs Wikipedia. "It's an interesting problem right now that we're having natural resource conversations about human-created data. I shouldn't laugh about it, but I do find it kind of amazing."

While some have sought to close off their data from AI training — often after it's already been taken without compensation — Wikipedia has placed few restrictions on how AI companies use its volunteer-written entries. Still, Deckelmann said she hopes there continue to be incentives for people to keep contributing, especially as a flood of cheap and automatically generated "garbage content" starts polluting the internet.

AI companies should be "concerned about how human-generated content continues to exist and continues to be accessible," she said.

From the perspective of AI developers, Epoch's study says paying millions of humans to



generate the text that AI models will need "is unlikely to be an economical way" to drive better technical performance.

As OpenAI begins work on training the next generation of its GPT large language models, CEO Sam Altman told the audience at a United Nations event last month that the company has already experimented with "generating lots of synthetic data" for training.

"I think what you need is high-quality data. There is low-quality synthetic data. There's low-quality human data," Altman said. But he also expressed reservations about relying too heavily on synthetic data over other technical methods to improve AI models.

"There'd be something very strange if the best way to train a model was to just generate, like, a quadrillion tokens of synthetic data and feed that back in," Altman said. "Somehow that seems inefficient."

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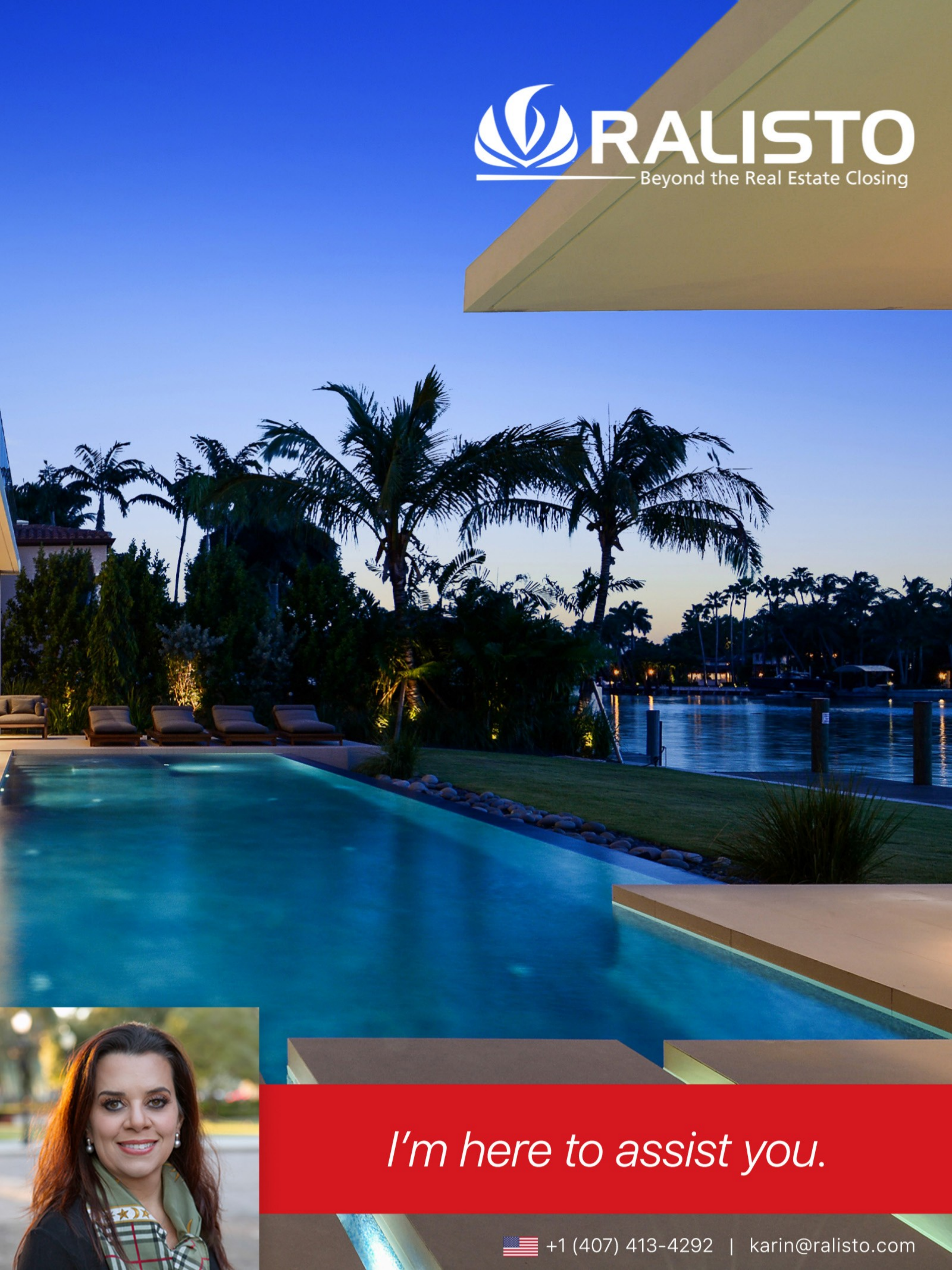
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A NEW ‘HUNGER GAMES’ BOOK — AND MOVIE — IS COMING

Inspired by an 18th century Scottish philosopher and the modern scourge of misinformation, Suzanne Collins is returning to the ravaged, post-apocalyptic land of Panem for a new "The Hunger Games" novel.

Scholastic announced Thursday that "Sunrise on the Reaping," the fifth volume of Collins' blockbuster dystopian series, will be published March 18, 2025. The new book begins with the reaping of the Fiftieth Hunger Games, set 24 years before the original "Hunger Games" novel, which came out in 2008, and 40 years after Collins' most recent book, "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes."

Lionsgate, which has released film adaptations of all four previous "Hunger Games" books, announced later on Thursday that "Sunrise on the Reaping" will open in theaters on Nov. 20, 2026. Francis Lawrence, who has worked on all but the first "Hunger Games" movie, will return as director.

The first four "Hunger Games" books have sold more than 100 million copies and been translated into dozens of languages. Collins had seemingly ended the series after the 2010 publication of "Mockingjay," writing in 2015 that it was "time to move on to other lands." But four years later, she stunned readers and the publishing world when she revealed she was working on what became "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes," released in 2020 and set 64 years before the first book.

Collins has drawn upon Greek mythology and the Roman gladiator games for her earlier "Hunger Games" books. But for the upcoming

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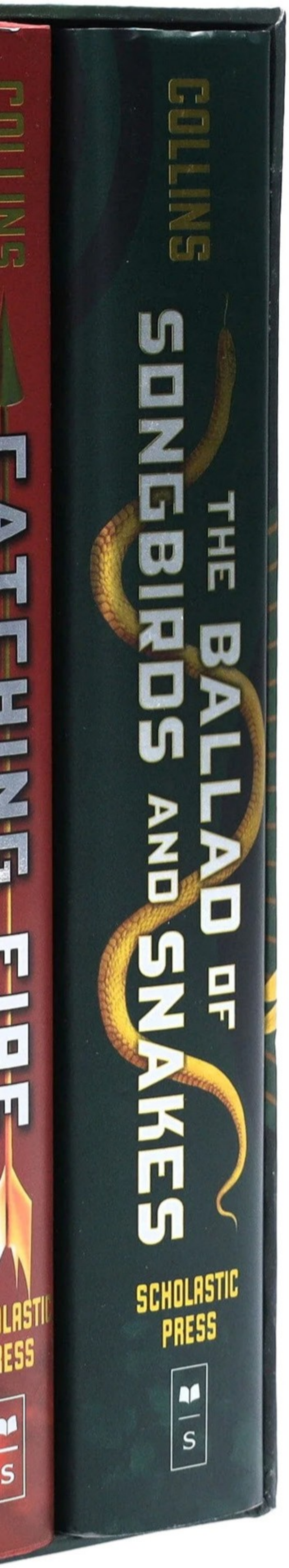


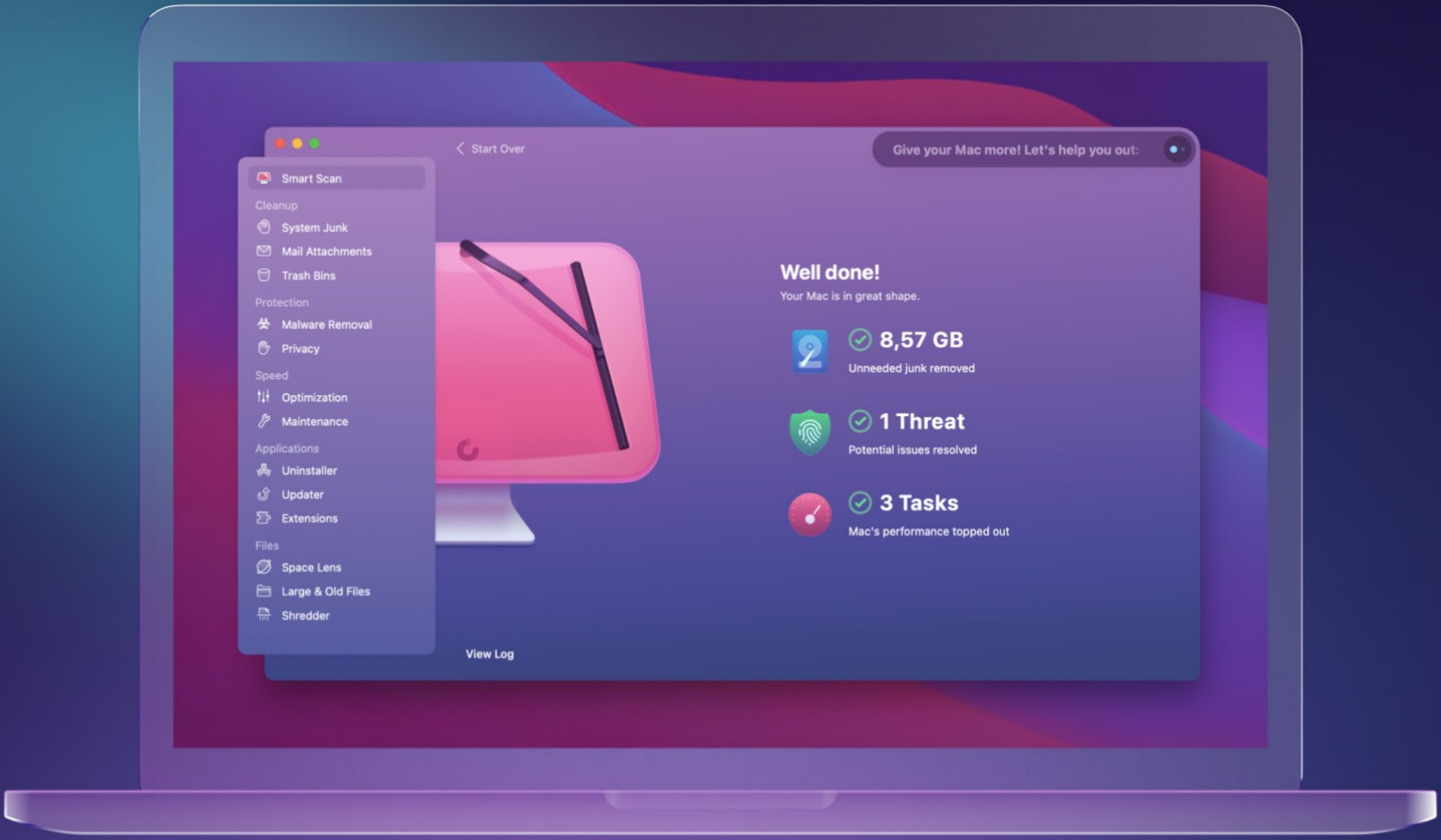
novel, she cites the Scottish Enlightenment philosopher David Hume.

“With ‘Sunrise on the Reaping,’ I was inspired by David Hume’s idea of implicit submission and, in his words, ‘the easiness with which the many are governed by the few,’” Collins said in a statement. “The story also lent itself to a deeper dive into the use of propaganda and the power of those who control the narrative. The question ‘Real or not real?’ seems more pressing to me every day.”

The “Hunger Games” movies are a multibillion dollar franchise for Lionsgate. Jennifer Lawrence portrayed heroine Katniss Everdeen in the film versions of “The Hunger Games,” “Catching Fire” and “Mockingjay,” the last of which came out in two installments. Other featured actors have included Philip Seymour Hoffman, Josh Hutcherson, Stanley Tucci and Donald Sutherland.

“Suzanne Collins is a master storyteller and our creative north star,” Lionsgate chair Adam Fogelson said in a statement. “We couldn’t be more fortunate than to be guided and trusted by a collaborator whose talent and imagination are so consistently brilliant.”

The film version of “Songbirds and Snakes,” starring Tom Blyth and Rachel Zegler, came out last year. This fall, a “Hunger Games” stage production is scheduled to debut in London.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SPACEX'S MEGA ROCKET COMPLETES ITS FOURTH TEST FLIGHT FROM TEXAS

SpaceX's mega Starship rocket completed its first full test flight Thursday, returning to Earth after blasting off from Texas.

It was the fourth launch of the world's biggest and most powerful rocket, standing nearly 400 feet (121 meters) tall. The three previous flight demos ended in self destruction. This time, the rocket and the spacecraft managed to splash down in a controlled fashion, making the hourlong flight the longest and most successful yet.

"Despite loss of many tiles and a damaged flap, Starship made it all the way to a soft landing in the ocean!" SpaceX CEO Elon Musk said via X.

Starship was empty as it soared above the Gulf of Mexico and headed east on a flight to the Indian Ocean. Within minutes, the first-stage booster separated from the spacecraft and splashed into the gulf precisely as planned, after firing its engines.

The spacecraft reached an altitude of nearly 130 miles (211 kilometers), traveling at more 16,000 mph (26,000 kph), before beginning its descent. Live views showed parts of the spacecraft breaking away during the intense heat of reentry, but a cracked camera lens obscured the images.

The spacecraft remained intact enough to transmit data all the way to its targeted splashdown site in the Indian Ocean.

It was a critical milestone in the company's plan to eventually reuse the rocket that NASA and Musk are counting on to get humanity to the moon and then Mars.

"What a show it has been," SpaceX launch commentator Kate Tice said from Mission Control at company headquarters in California.

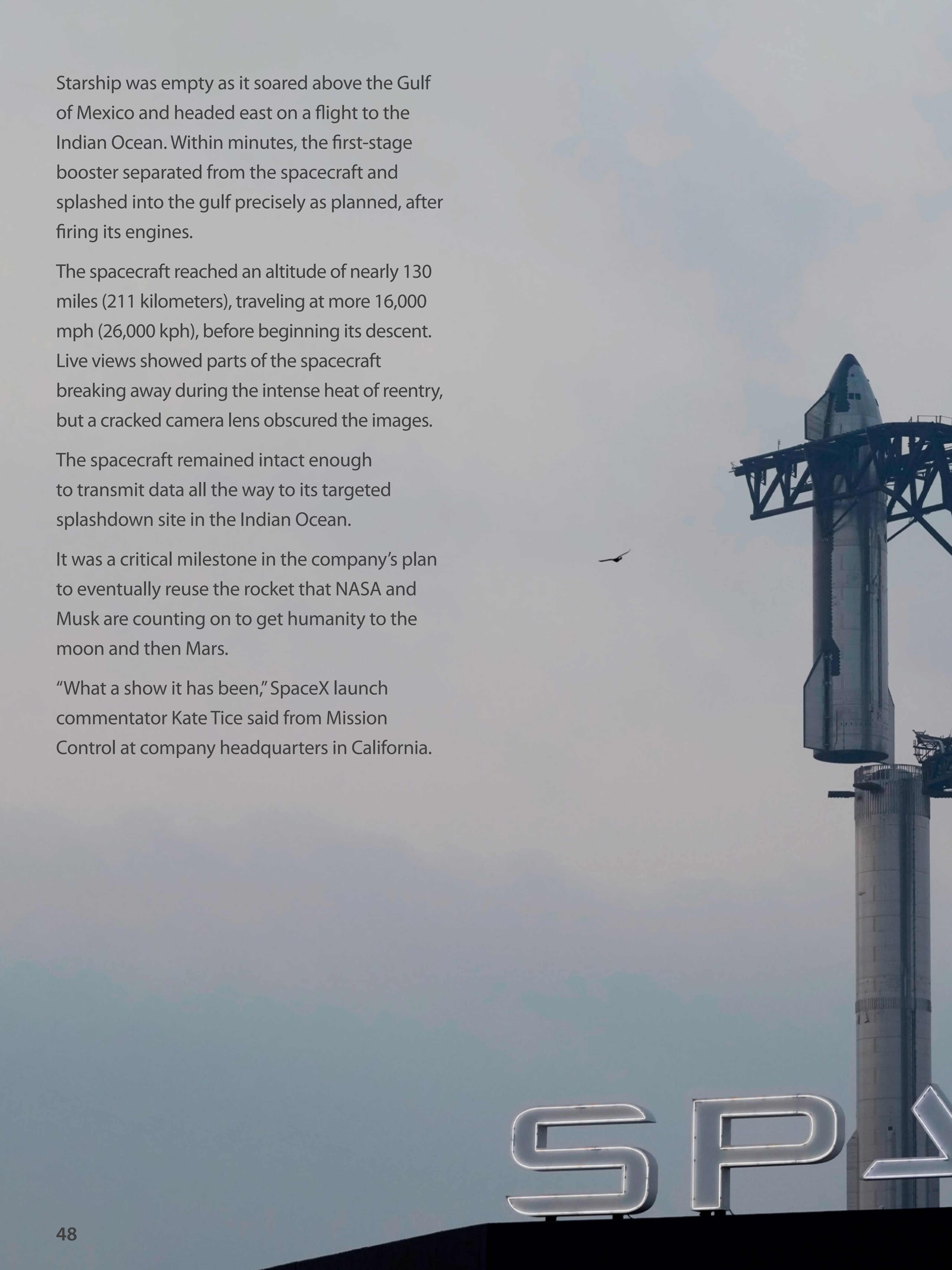


Image: Eric Gay

SpaceX came close to avoiding explosions in March, but lost contact with the spacecraft as it careened out of space and blew up short of its goal. The booster also ruptured in flight, a quarter-mile above the gulf.

Last year's two test flights ended in explosions shortly after blasting off from the southern tip of Texas near the Mexican border. The first one cratered the pad at Boca Chica Beach and hurled debris for thousands of feet (meters).

SpaceX upgraded the software and made some rocket-flyback changes to improve the odds. The Federal Aviation Administration signed off Tuesday on this fourth demo, saying all safety requirements had been met.

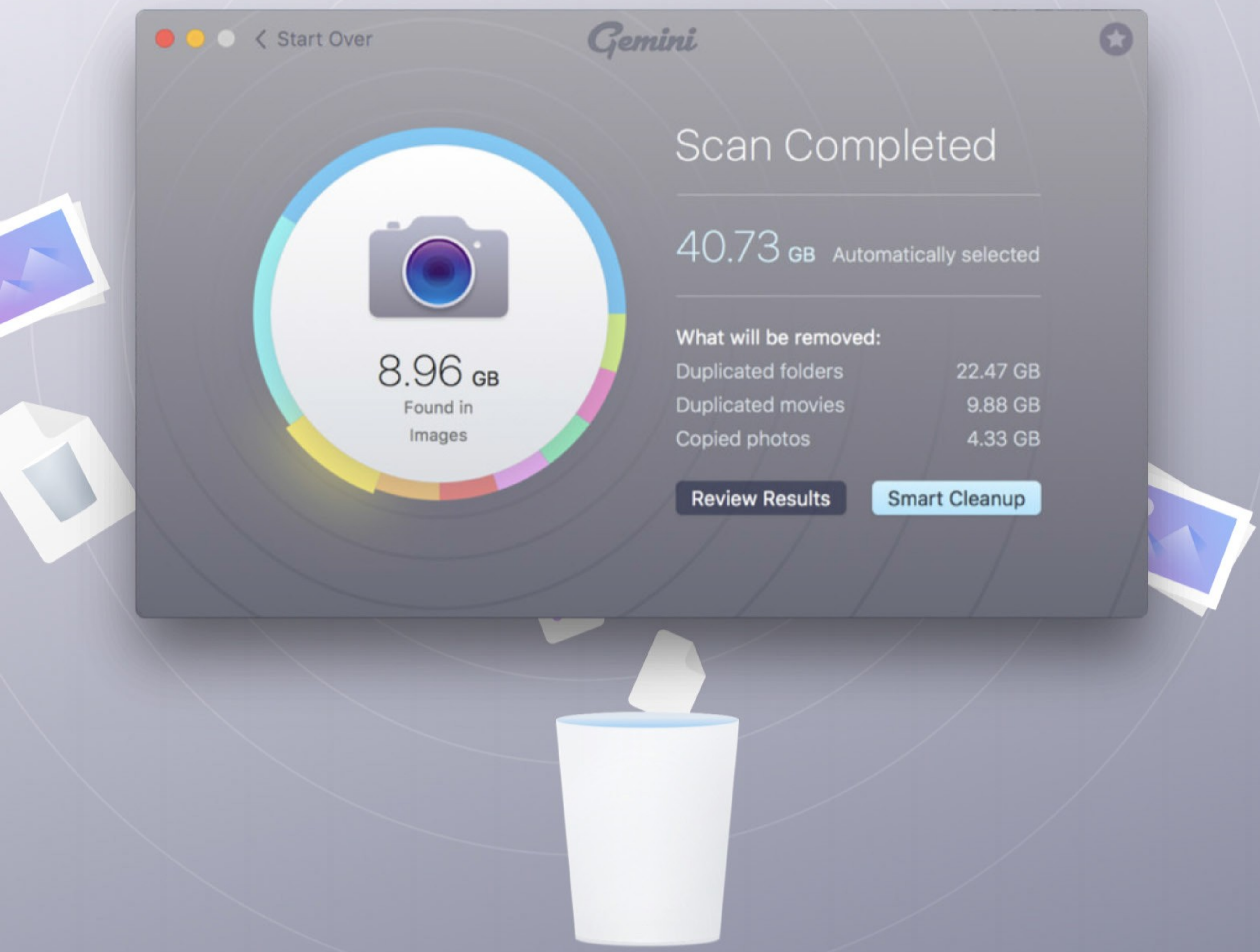
Starship is designed to be fully reusable. That's why SpaceX wants to control the booster's entry into the gulf and the spacecraft's descent into the Indian Ocean — it's intended as practice for planned future landings. Nothing is being recovered from Thursday's flight.

NASA has ordered a pair of Starships for two moon-landing missions by astronauts, on tap for later this decade. Each moon crew will rely on NASA's own rocket and capsule to leave Earth, but meet up with Starship in lunar orbit for the ride down to the surface.

SpaceX already is selling tourist trips around the moon. The first private lunar customer, a Japanese tycoon, pulled out of the trip with his entourage last week, citing the oft-delayed schedule.

SpaceX's founder and CEO has grander plans: Musk envisions fleets of Starships launching people and the infrastructure necessary to build a city on Mars.

SpaceX Launches Fourth Starship Flight Test



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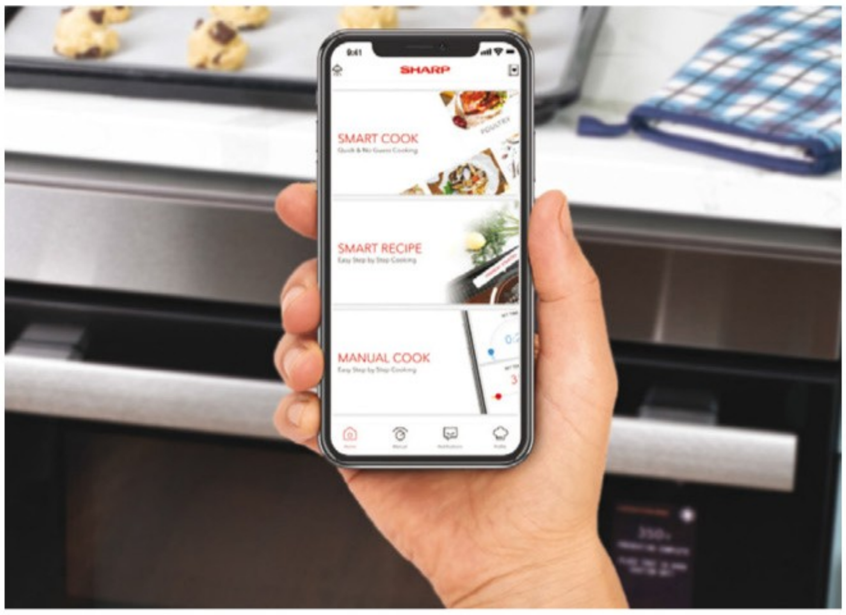

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS: WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE WISH THEY'D KNOWN ABOUT SOCIAL MEDI

It's dangerous. It's addictive. Get off your phone.

Kids constantly hear about the downsides of social media from the adults in their lives, often in the form of dire warnings and commands. But these adults did not grow up with social media themselves.

They didn't get a phone handed to them as toddlers, just to keep them quiet in a restaurant. They didn't join TikTok's predecessor Musica.ly

and do silly dances before they even learned to read. They didn't have their schools shut down in a global pandemic, their connections to friends and peers relegated to phone and computer screens.

Kids coming of age with social media are forging ahead in a whole new world. And now that they are getting older, they have some advice for their younger peers.

Here's what they wish they knew when they first got online.

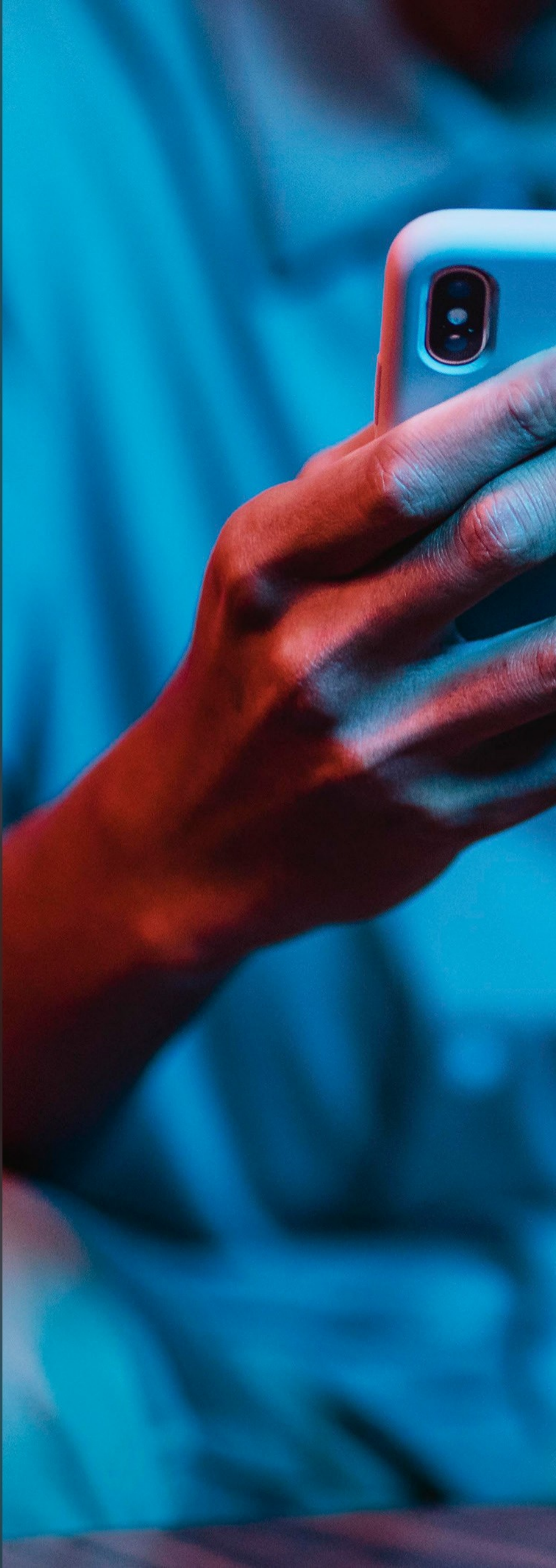
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SHARE EVERYTHING

"It's so easy to look at your friends' stories and feel this feeling of FOMO, of missing out and comparing yourself, like: 'Oh, my friend just got a new car.' It's like this overwhelming sense of comparison. But the things that people post on social media, it's just the highlight reel, like the 1% of their life that they want to showcase to other people."

BAO LE, 18, a freshman at Vanderbilt University

DON'T TAKE IT TOO SERIOUSLY

"My main point of advice would be not to take it too seriously. Be yourself. I feel like what I was exposed to as a 12-year-old was much more limited than what is accessible to 12–year-olds nowadays. Younger kids want to be who they idolize. And when the TikTok stars or the social media stars are 20, 18, 16, they're going to want to be like them. You're getting younger kids that are now obsessing over products and brands, and it's just getting really hard to be young. And it shouldn't be really hard to be young. You should



be enjoying childhood. And we shouldn't be rushing to grow up. It's OK to be 12. It's OK to be young. It's OK to enjoy childhood."

DOREEN MALATA, 22, a senior at the University of Maryland

HOW ADDICTIVE IT IS

"It seems like it would be really easy to just put your phone down and stop scrolling. But it is not. If there was advice that I could give to my younger self, it would be to tell my parents to set up time limits for me — even though I would have never said that when I was starting social media. Also, I personally would not let my kid have TikTok. I would try to resist it as long as I could. It's so addictive."

SIENNA KEENE, 17, a high school senior in Orinda, California

TAKE A SOCIAL MEDIA DETOX

"When you first get these apps, it hits you — like, BOOM, there is so much content. Styles, fashion models. It really impacts you heavily when you first get it, this feeling of: 'How do they do it? How do they look like this? How do they get clothes like that?' When you're new to social media, these trends can overtake you. I started to use screentime (monitoring) on my phone and limit the amount of time I am on social media. I've been taking phone detoxes. On weekends, I'll take a social media detox for 10 hours or the majority of the day. I'll hang out with my family, ride my bike. I only have notifications for my messages and workspaces. I don't have any notifications on for social media apps."

ASTRONAUT
ASTRONA

AVA HAVIDIC, 18, a high school senior in Broward County, Florida

YOU ARE THE ONE IN CONTROL

“Often I hear the term “social media user,” but I felt like I was being used by social media. I had this routine of scrolling mindlessly through TikTok, just scrolling and scrolling and comparing myself to other people. It ultimately really affected my body image, my perception of what was considered beautiful or accepted into society. But the only thing I was getting out of social media was feeling fatigued, or I would feel sad.

You can use social media to amplify your passions, but in order to do that you need to do a lot of work outside of social media, to discover who you are as a person, what matters to you and what contributions you can make to the world.”

LEA NEPOMUCENO, 18, a freshman at George Washington University

IT’S A WASTE OF TIME

“I would say just don’t use it. It’s kind of a waste of time. You’re just having conversations about pointless things, random pop culture stuff. It just sucks your time. You’re not really getting anything out of it, just short-term satisfaction. It’s kind of meaningless. I know this is kind of outlandish, but I feel like there should be some sort of age limit because I don’t think children should be on the internet.”

MIKAEL MAKONNEN, 18, a freshman at American University

Reels
Disco Light

A LOT OF IT IS NOT REAL

“A lot of people make their life artificial so that they’re perceived in a certain way. And I think going into social media, I wish I knew it is a tool to learn from. There’s so much information, and you’re able to learn so much about different things. ... I wish people had that outlook rather than the whole idea of other people viewing you and having to be seen a certain way.”

NOUR MAHMOUD, 21, a junior at Virginia Commonwealth University

IT’S OK TO PUT UP BOUNDARIES AND BLOCK SOMEONE

“You can’t scroll on TikTok or look through Instagram without seeing supermodels who have edited their photos and are promoting unrealistic beauty standards. I don’t want to see these girls who pretend to be fitness influencers but are just promoting an eating disorder like “body checking” on my feed. That is one thing I wish I knew when I started: that it is OK to not want to look at that or want to consume it. It’s OK to protect yourself and your own body image. Another thing I wish I knew is that not everyone on social media is your friend. When you are young and impressionable and people are reaching out to you, just know that not everyone is as friendly as you think they are.”

MADELEINE MAESTRE, 18, a freshman at Santa Clara University

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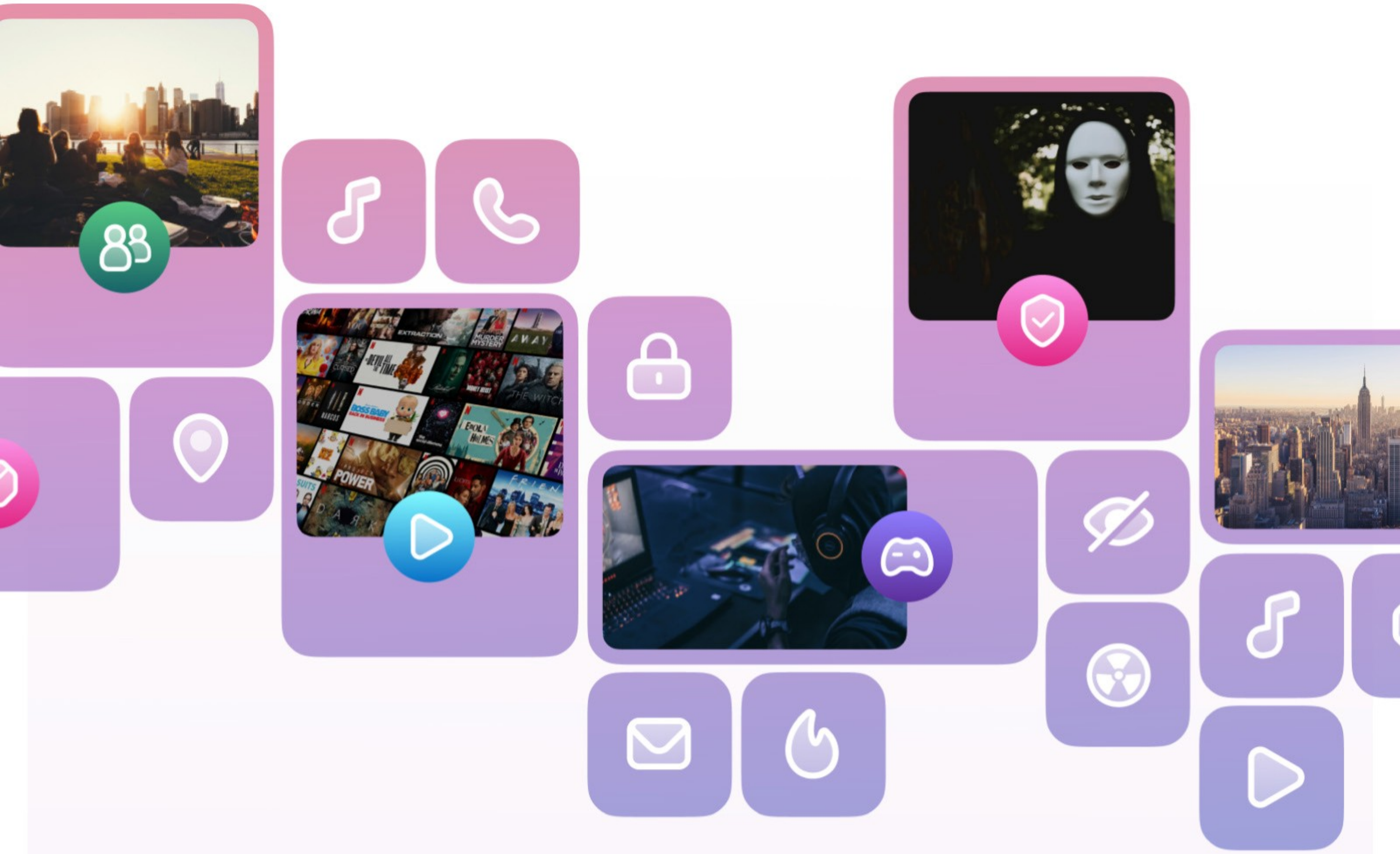

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LIFE AS A TEEN WITHOUT SOCIAL MEDIA ISN'T EASY. THESE FAMILIES ARE NAVIGATING ADOLESCENCE OFFLINE

Kate Bulkeley's pledge to stay off social media in high school worked at first. She watched the benefits pile up: She was getting excellent grades. She read lots of books. The family had lively conversations around the dinner table and gathered for movie nights on weekends.

Then, as sophomore year got underway, the unexpected problems surfaced. She missed a student government meeting arranged on Snapchat. Her Model U.N. team communicates on social media, too, causing her scheduling problems. Even the Bible Study club at her Connecticut high school uses Instagram to communicate with members.

Image: Andres kudacki

BULKELEY

Image: Julia Nikhinson

Gabriela Durham, a high school senior in Brooklyn, says navigating high school without social media has made her who she is today. She is a focused, organized, straight-A student with a string of college acceptances — and an accomplished dancer who recently made her Broadway debut. Not having social media has made her an "outsider," in some ways. That used to hurt; now, she says, it feels like a badge of honor.

With the damaging consequences of social media increasingly well documented, some parents are trying to raise their children with restrictions or blanket bans. Teenagers themselves are aware that too much social media is bad for them, and some are initiating social media "cleanses" because of the toll it takes on mental health and grades.

But it is hard to be a teenager today without social media. For those trying to stay off social platforms while most of their peers are immersed, the path can be challenging, isolating and at times liberating. It can also be life-changing.

This is a tale of two families, social media and the ever-present challenge of navigating high school. It's about what kids do when they can't extend their Snapstreaks or shut their bedroom doors and scroll through TikTok past midnight. It's about what families discuss when they're not having screen-time battles. It's also about persistent social ramifications.

The journeys of both families show the rewards and pitfalls of trying to avoid social media in a world that is saturated by it.

A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE

Concerns about children and phone use are not new. But there is a growing realization among experts that the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed adolescence. As youth coped with isolation and spent excessive time online, the pandemic effectively carved out a much larger space for social media in the lives of American kids.

No longer just a distraction or a way to connect with friends, social media has matured into a physical space and a community that almost all U.S. teenagers belong to. Up to 95% of teenagers say they use social media, with more than one-third saying they are on it "almost constantly," according to the Pew Research Center.

More than ever, teenagers live in a seamless digital and non-digital world in ways that most adults don't recognize or understand, says Michael Rich, a pediatrics professor at Harvard Medical School and head of the nonprofit Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital.

"Social media is now the air kids breathe," says Rich, who runs the hospital's Clinic for Interactive Media and Internet Disorders.

For better or worse, social media has become a home-base for socializing. It's where many kids turn to forge their emerging identities, to seek advice, to unwind and relieve stress. It impacts how kids dress and talk. In this era of parental control apps and location tracking, social media is where this generation is finding freedom.

It is also increasingly clear that the more time youth spend online, the higher the risk of mental health problems.

Image: Julia Nikhinson

Kids who use social media for more than three hours a day face double the risk of depression and anxiety, according to studies cited by U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, who issued an extraordinary public warning last spring about the risks of social media to young people.

Those were the concerns of the Bulkeleys and Gabriela's mother, Elena Romero. Both set strict rules starting when their kids were young and still in elementary school. They delayed giving phones until middle school and made social media off limits until 18. They educated the girls, and their younger siblings, on the impact of social media on young brains, on online privacy concerns, on the dangers of posting photos or comments that can come back to haunt you.

In the absence of social media, at least in these two homes, there is a noticeable absence of screen time battles. But the kids and parents agree: It's not always easy.

WHEN IT'S EVERYWHERE, IT'S HARD TO AVOID

At school, on the subway and at dance classes around New York City, Gabriela is surrounded by reminders that social media is everywhere — except on her phone.

Growing up without it has meant missing out on things. Everyone but you gets the same jokes, practices the same TikTok dances, is up on the latest viral trends. When Gabriela was younger, that felt isolating; at times, it still does. But now, she sees not having social media as freeing.

"From my perspective, as an outsider," she says, "it seems like a lot of kids use social media to

Image: Andres kudacki

promote a facade. And it's really sad. Because social media is telling them how they should be and how they should look. It's gotten to a point where everyone wants to look the same instead of being themselves."

There is also friend drama on social media and a lack of honesty, humility and kindness that she feels lucky to be removed from.

Gabriela is a dance major at the Brooklyn High School of the Arts and dances outside of school seven days a week. Senior year got especially intense, with college and scholarship applications capped by an unexpected highlight of getting to perform at Broadway's Shubert Theatre in March as part of a city showcase of high school musicals.

After a recent Saturday afternoon dance class in a Bronx church basement, the diverging paths between Gabriela and her peers is on full display. The other dancers, aged 11 to 16, sit cross-legged on the linoleum floor talking about social media.

"I am addicted," says 15-year-old Arielle Williams, who stays up late scrolling through TikTok. "When I feel like I'm getting tired I say, 'One more video.' And then I keep saying, 'One more video.' And I stay up sometimes until 5 a.m."

The other dancers gasp. One suggests they all check their phones' weekly screen time.

"OH. MY," says Arielle, staring at her screen. "My total was 68 hours last week." That included 21 hours on TikTok.

Gabriela sits on the sidelines of the conversation, listening silently. But on the No.

memories
family is...
fun
laughter
CAFE
I'm the QUEEN of this Castle

Image: Andres kudacki

Image: Julia Nikhinson

2 subway home to Brooklyn, she shares her thoughts. “Those screen-time hours, it’s insane.”

As the train rumbles from the elevated tracks in the Bronx into the underground subway tunnels in Manhattan, Gabriela is on her phone. She texts with friends, listens to music and consults a subway app to count down the stops to her station in Brooklyn. The phone for her is a distraction limited to idle time, which has been strategically limited by Romero.

“My kids’ schedules will make your head spin,” Romero says as the family reconvenes Saturday night in their three-bedroom walkup in Bushwick. On school days, they’re up at 5:30 a.m. and out the door by 7. Romero drives the girls to their three schools scattered around Brooklyn, then takes the subway into Manhattan, where she teaches mass communications at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Grace, 11, is a sixth grade cheerleader active in Girl Scouts, along with Gionna, 13, who sings, does debate team and has daily rehearsals for her middle school theater production.

“I’m so booked my free time is to sleep,” says Gabriela, who tries to be in bed by 10:30 p.m.

In New York City, it’s common for kids to get phones early in elementary school, but Romero waited until each daughter reached middle school and started taking public transportation home alone. Years ago, she sat them down to watch “The Social Dilemma,” a documentary that Gabriela says made her realize how tech companies manipulate their users.

Her mom’s rules are simple: No social media on phones until 18. The girls are allowed to use YouTube on their computers but not post videos. Romero doesn't set screen-time limits or restrict phone use in bedrooms.

"It's a struggle, don't get me wrong," Romero says. Last year, the two younger girls "slipped." They secretly downloaded TikTok for a few weeks before getting caught and sternly lectured.

Romero is considering whether to bend her rule for Gionna, an avid reader interested in becoming a Young Adult "Bookstagrammer" — a book reviewer on Instagram. Gionna wants to be a writer when she grows up and loves the idea that reviewers get books for free.

Her mother is torn. Romero's main concern was social media during middle school, a critical age where kids are forming their identity. She supports the idea of using social media responsibly as a tool to pursue passions.

"When you're a little older," she tells her girls, "you'll realize Mom was not as crazy as you thought."

STRUGGLING NOT TO MISS OUT

In the upscale suburb of Westport, Connecticut, the Bulkeleys have faced similar questions about bending their rules. But not for the reason they had anticipated.

Kate was perfectly content to not have social media. Her parents had figured at some point she might resist their ban because of peer pressure or fear of missing out. But the 15-year-old sees it as a waste of time. She describes herself as academic, introverted and focused on building up extracurricular activities.

CARTE POSTALE
Bonjour
Paris

Image: Andres kudacki

That’s why she needed Instagram.

“I needed it to be co-president of my Bible Study Club,” Kate explains, seated with her family in the living room of their two-story home.

As Kate’s sophomore year started, she told her parents that she was excited to be leading a variety of clubs but needed social media to do her job. They agreed to let her have Instagram for her afterschool activities, which they found ironic and frustrating. “It was the school that really drove the fact that we had to reconsider our rule about no social media,” says Steph Bulkeley, Kate’s mother.

Schools talk the talk about limiting screen time and the dangers of social media, says Kate’s dad, Russ Bulkeley. But technology is rapidly becoming part of the school day. Kate’s high school and their 13-year-old daughter Sutton’s middle school have cell phone bans that aren’t enforced. Teachers will ask students to take out their phones to photograph material during class time.

The Bulkeleys aren’t on board with that, but feel powerless to change it. When their girls were still in elementary school, the Bulkeleys were inspired by the “Wait Until 8th” pledge, which encourages parents to wait to give children smartphones, and access to social media, until at least 8th grade or about age 13. Some experts say waiting until 16 is better. Others feel banning social media isn’t the answer, and that kids need to learn to live with the technology because it’s not going anywhere.

Ultimately they gave in to Kate’s plea because they trust her, and because she’s too busy to devote much time to social media.

Both Kate and Sutton wrap up afterschool activities that include theater and dance classes at 8:30 p.m. most weeknights. They get home, finish homework and try to be in bed by 11.

Kate spends an average of two hours a week on her phone. That is significantly less than most, according to a 2023 Gallup poll that found over half of U.S. teens spend an average of five hours each day on social media. She uses her phone mainly to make calls, text friends, check grades and take photos. She doesn't post or share pictures, one of her parents' rules. Others: No phones allowed in bedrooms. All devices stay on a ledge between the kitchen and living room. TV isn't allowed on school nights.

Kate has rejected her parents' offer to pay her for waiting to use social media. But she is embarking slowly on the apps. She has set a six-minute daily time limit as a reminder not to dawdle on Instagram.

Having the app came in handy earlier this year at a Model UN conference where students from around the world exchanged contact details: "Nobody asked for phone numbers. You gave your Instagram," Kate says. She is resisting Snapchat, for fear she will find it addictive. She has asked a friend on student government to text her any important student government messages sent on Snapchat.

Sutton feels the weight of not having social media more than her older sister. The eighth grader describes herself as social but not popular.

"There's a lot of popular girls that do a bunch of TikTok dances. That's really what determines your popularity: TikTok," Sutton says.

Kids in her grade are "obsessed with TikTok" and posting videos of themselves that look to her like carbon copies. The girls look the same in short crop tops and jeans and sound the same, speaking with a TikTok dialect that includes a lot of "Hey, guys!" and uptalk, their voices rising in tone at the end of a thought.

She feels left out at times but doesn't feel the need to have social media, since one of her friends sends her the latest viral videos. She has seen firsthand the problems social media can cause in friend groups. "Two of my friends were having a fight. One thought the other one blocked her on Snapchat."

There's a long way to go before these larger questions are resolved, with these two families and across the nation. Schools are trying. Some are banning phones entirely to hold students' focus and ensure that socializing happens face-to-face. It might, educators say, also help cut back on teen depression and anxiety.

That's something Sutton can understand at age 13 as she works to navigate the years ahead. From what she has seen, social media has changed in the past few years. It used to be a way for people to connect, to message and to get to know each other.

"It's kind of just about bragging now," she says. "People post pictures of their trips to amazing places. Or looking beautiful. And it makes other people feel bad about themself."

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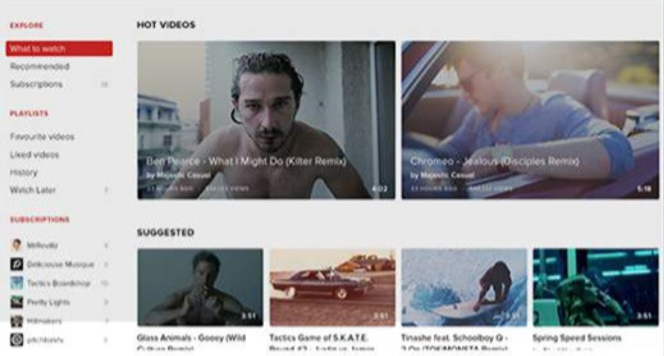

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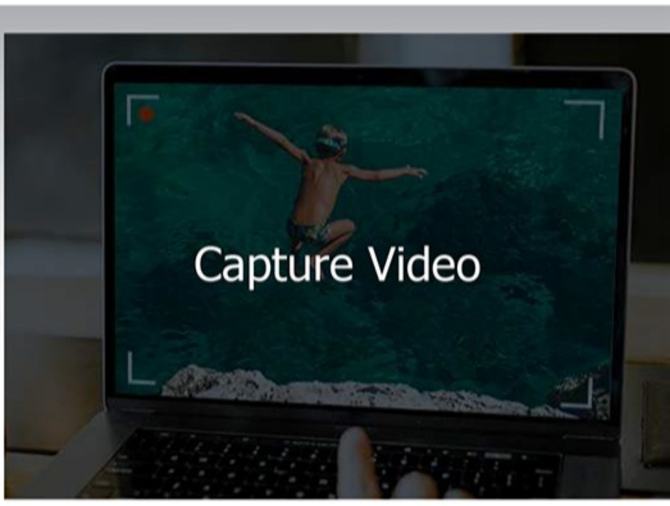

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Wellness

NAVIGATING CONSUMERISM & TECHNOLOGY FOR A BALANCED LIFESTYLE

The "No-Buy Year" trend has become a beacon of mindfulness and simplicity in an era dominated by consumerism. It encourages people to abstain from non-essential purchases, compelling them to evaluate their consumption habits and focus on what truly matters. The result is a balanced spending approach that fosters a healthier, more intentional lifestyle.

THE CONSUMERISM CONUNDRUM

Our modern world is inundated with advertisements, discounts, and the constant allure of new products. This pervasive culture of consumption can lead to overspending and a cluttered life filled with items we seldom use or need. In the United States, Americans waste an eye-watering **$18,000 yearly on 'non-essential items' and purchases they'll regret later.** In the UK, **hidden fees and forgotten subscriptions cost Britain £129 billion annually.** 0 The No-Buy Year philosophy challenges this norm, urging us to rethink our purchasing decisions and differentiate between wants and needs. Doing so can reduce financial stress, minimize environmental impact, and cultivate a more meaningful existence.

The roots of consumerism run deep, embedded in a society where material possessions are often equated with success and happiness. Advertising plays a significant role in this, with companies spending billions annually to convince us that their products will improve our lives. The rise of e-commerce has further accelerated this trend, making it easier to purchase items with a few clicks - even fewer when using Apple Pay and an Apple Card! However, this convenience comes at a cost, both financially and environmentally. The No-Buy Year is a radical yet practical response to this issue, encouraging us to step back and reconsider our relationship with material goods.

GUESS
LEON
SALSA SHOP

Image: Kleomenis Spyroglou

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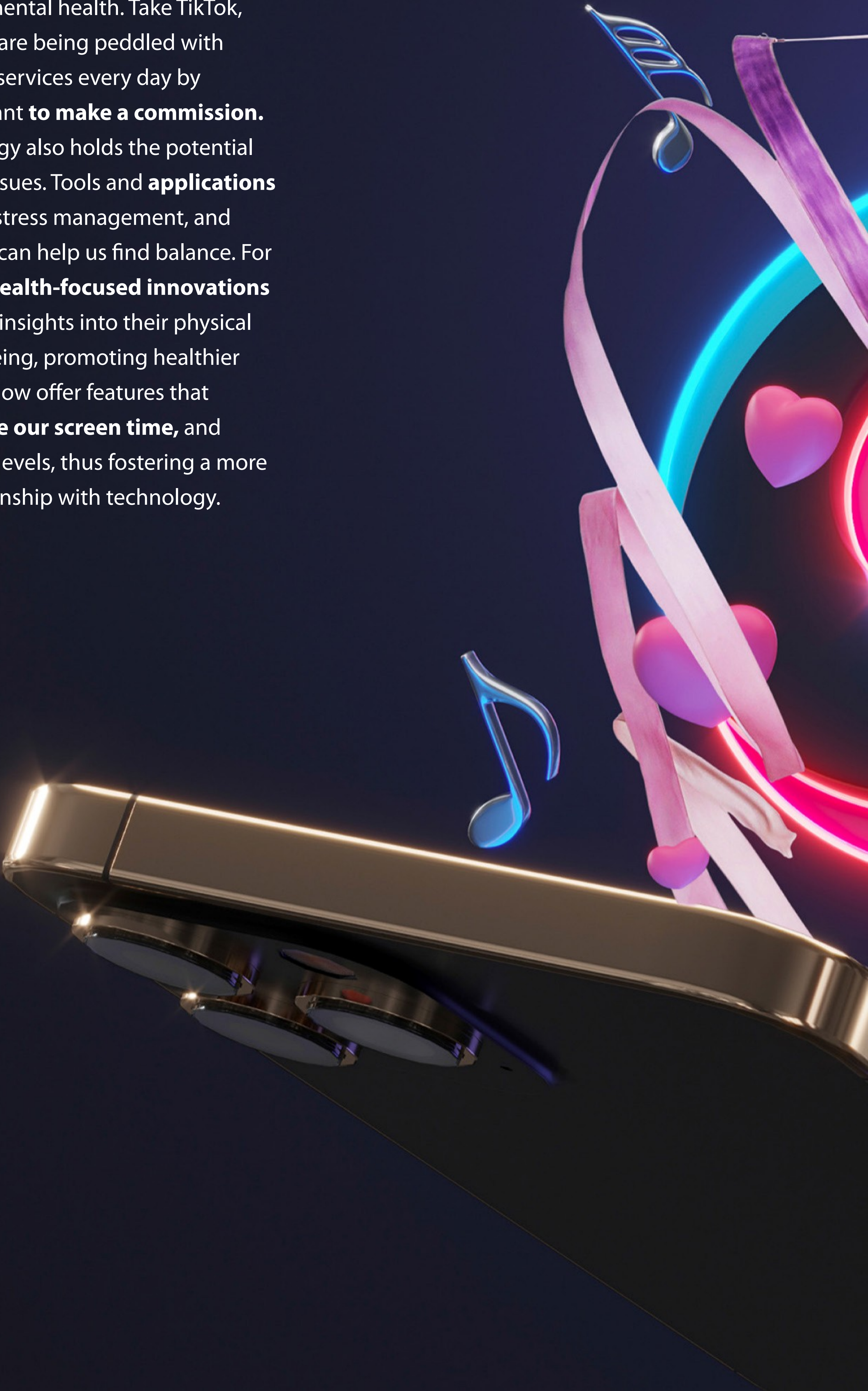
TECHNOLOGY’S IMPACT

Conversely, technology has woven itself into the fabric of our daily lives, fulfilling many needs, from communication to entertainment, work, and beyond. Devices like the iPhone have revolutionized how we interact with the world, combining the functions of numerous gadgets from yesteryears into a single, powerful tool. Twenty years ago, a desk might have been cluttered with a phone, fax machine, monitor, camera, post-its, magazines, newspapers, contact cards, iPod, books, and a computer. Today, all these functions and more are integrated into a smartphone, exemplifying the concept of digital minimalism. However, the question arises: where do we go from here? As we look towards the future, the principles of digital minimalism encourage us to use technology wisely, enhancing our lives without becoming overwhelmed by it.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of mental health, with about a **quarter of Americans experiencing some form of mental illness post-pandemic**. This surge in mental health issues raises concerns about the impact of technology and social media on our well-being. **Excessive screen time**, constant connectivity, and the pressure of social media can exacerbate anxiety and stress, contributing to a health crisis.

Research has shown that excessive use of technology, particularly social media, can lead to **feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, and depression.** The constant comparison with others, the pressure to present a perfect life, and the addictive nature of these platforms

can take a toll on mental health. Take TikTok, for example. Users are being peddled with new products and services every day by influencers who want **to make a commission.** However, technology also holds the potential to alleviate these issues. Tools and **applications for mindfulness,** stress management, and health monitoring can help us find balance. For instance, **Apple's health-focused innovations** provide users with insights into their physical and mental well-being, promoting healthier lifestyles. Devices now offer features that allow us to **manage our screen time,** and monitor our stress levels, thus fostering a more harmonious relationship with technology.



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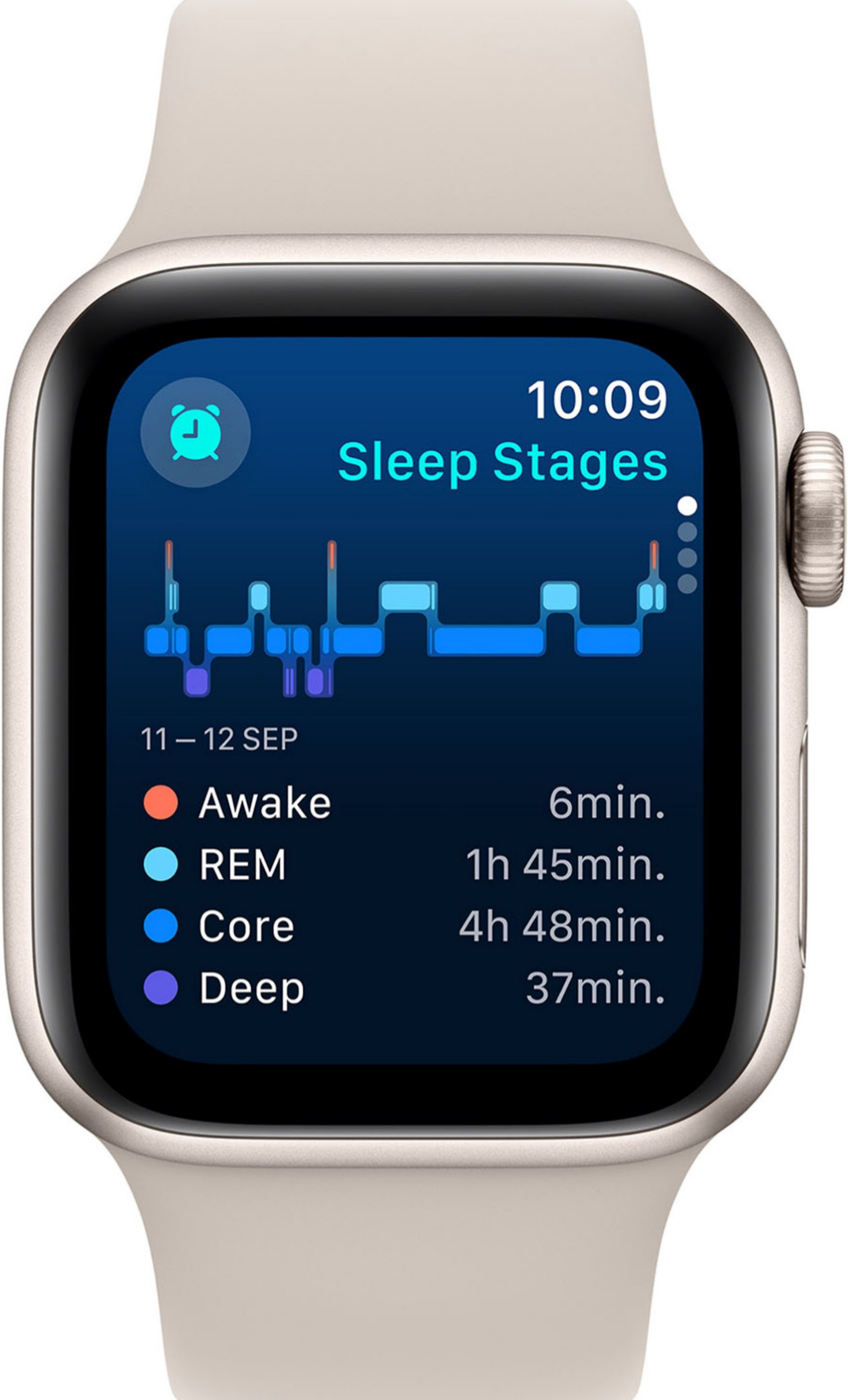
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Sleep Stages
11 — 12 SEP

● Awake	6min.
● REM	1h 45min.
● Core	4h 48min.
● Deep	37min.

10:15
Opal
NOW
8.2
Excellent Focus
LAST HOUR
▼ -0.4
SCREEN TIME
3h 17m
PICKU
123
6A
12P
6P
In Session • 33
Work Hours
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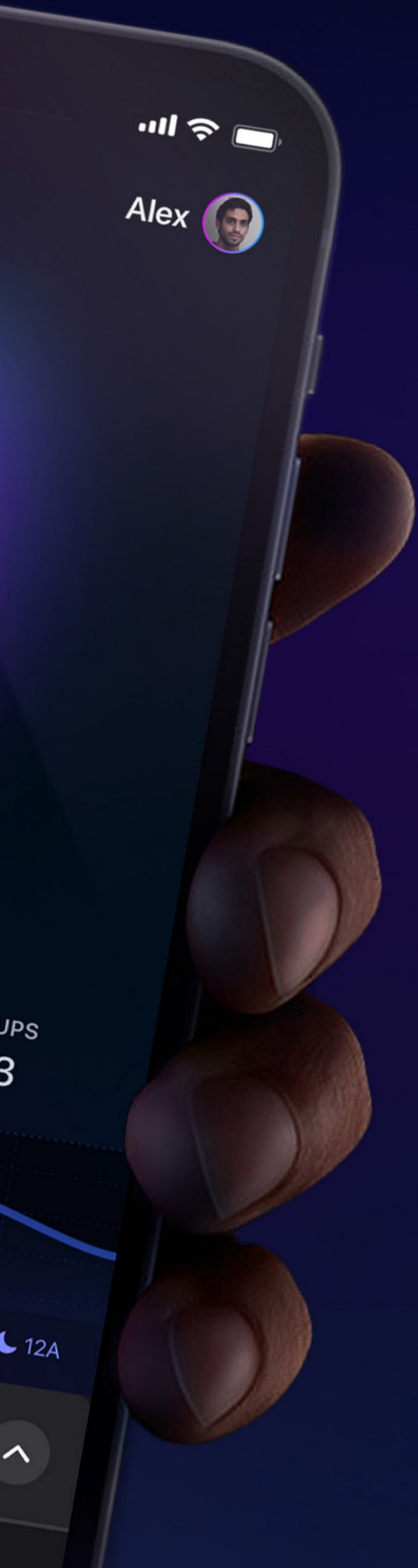
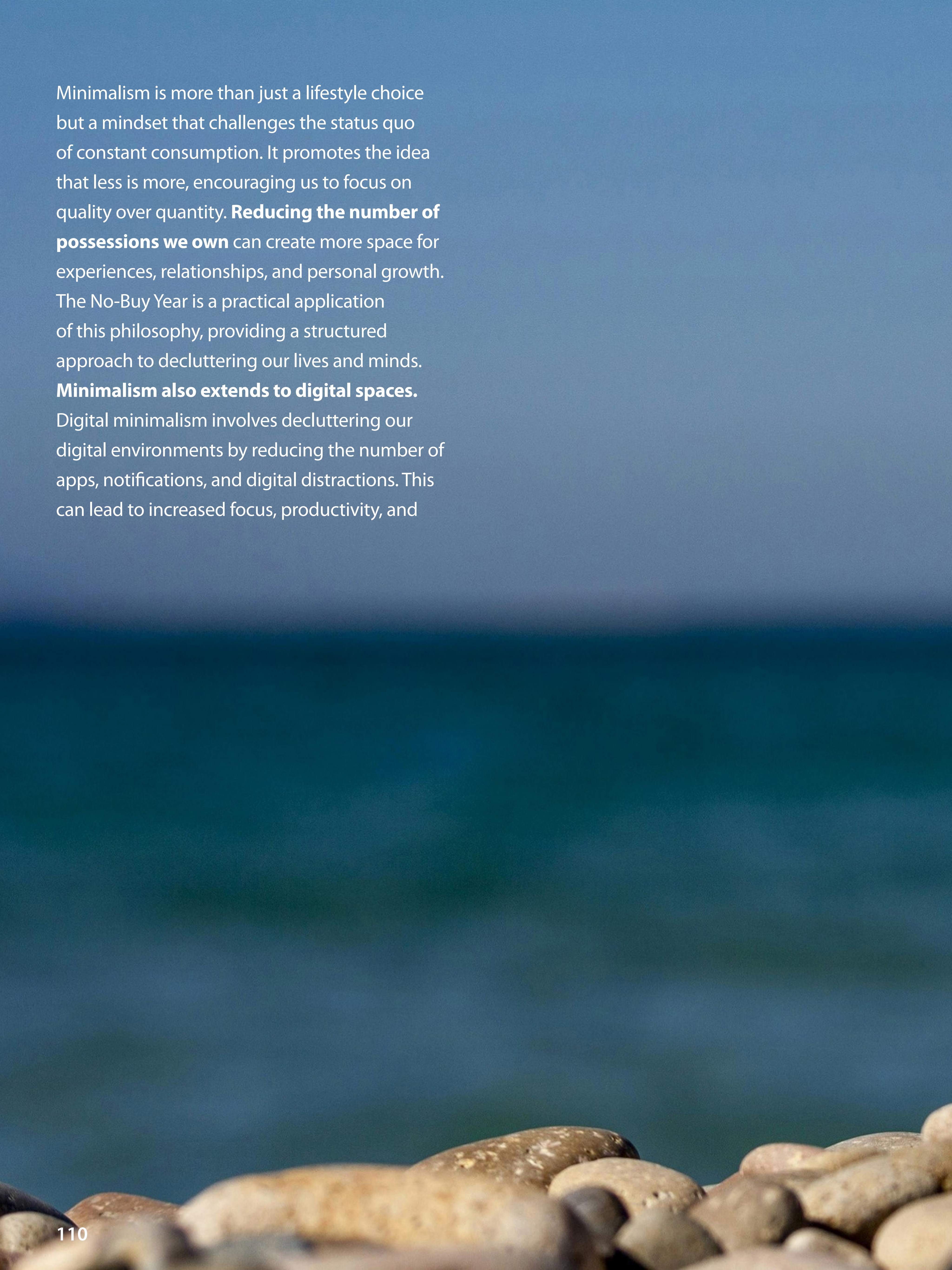
Home



FINDING A BALANCE

We must adopt a balanced approach to harness the benefits of technology while mitigating its downsides. Devices can empower us by enhancing our productivity, creativity, and communication, but they must also be managed thoughtfully. Experts recommend setting boundaries for device usage, especially during personal time. Use features that limit screen time and encourage breaks. Use health-tracking apps to monitor physical and mental health metrics. Review these insights regularly to make informed lifestyle changes. Utilize productivity apps to streamline tasks and reduce clutter digitally and physically. Periodically **disconnect from digital devices to recharge and reconnect with the physical world.** Finally, consider following the No-Buy Year principles by critically assessing the necessity of new purchases, both digital and physical.

Minimalism is more than just a lifestyle choice but a mindset that challenges the status quo of constant consumption. It promotes the idea that less is more, encouraging us to focus on quality over quantity. **Reducing the number of possessions we own** can create more space for experiences, relationships, and personal growth. The No-Buy Year is a practical application of this philosophy, providing a structured approach to decluttering our lives and minds. **Minimalism also extends to digital spaces.** Digital minimalism involves decluttering our digital environments by reducing the number of apps, notifications, and digital distractions. This can lead to increased focus, productivity, and



mental clarity. We can create a more balanced and fulfilling lifestyle by applying minimalism principles to our physical and digital lives.

As we navigate the complexities of a tech-saturated world, the philosophy of digital minimalism offers a roadmap for a more balanced, fulfilling life. By integrating mindful consumption and thoughtful technology, we can achieve a lifestyle prioritizing well-being over excess. The No-Buy Year is not just about abstaining from purchases. It's a holistic approach to redefining our relationship with material possessions and digital devices.

136

des *pensar* tu camino hacia un estado de salud perfecto, el
perfecto, el peso perfecto y la juventud eterna. Puedes hacer
ifieste, pensando coherentemente en la perfección.

TOR

fermedad, te estás enfocando
gente de la misma, vas a
tus células. Visualízate
tamente sano. Haz que
d.

suelen hablar de ella
continuamente y
poco mal, no
te de que tu
te todas
muy

dando energía a su enfermedad. Si realmente quieres ayudarlas, cambia de conversación y habla de cosas buenas, si puedes, si no márchate. Cuando te vayas dedica tus poderosos pensamientos y sentimientos a ver a esa persona en buen estado y luego déjalo ir.

137

LISA NICHOLS

Digamos que hay dos personas, ambas tienen la misma enfermedad, pero una elige enfocarse en ser feliz. Elige vivir en la posibilidad y la esperanza, enfocarse en todas las razones por las que debería sentirse feliz y agradecida. Luego tienes a la otra. El mismo diagnóstico, pero ésta elige enfocarse en la enfermedad, el dolor y en el «¡Vaya me ha tocado a mí!».

BOB DOYLE

Cuando las personas están totalmente enfocadas en lo que está mal y en sus síntomas, los perpetúan. La sanación no se producirá hasta que cambien su enfoque, de estar enfermas a estar bien. Eso se debe a la ley de la atracción.

«Recordemos siempre que podamos que
todo pensamiento desagradable supone
literalmente poner algo malo en el cuerpo.»

Prentice Mulford

R JOHN HAGELIN

*ntos más felices conducen a una bioquímica
n cuerpo más feliz y saludable. Está*

The path to a balanced lifestyle lies in recognizing the dual nature of technology and consumerism. By embracing the principles of the No-Buy Year and digital minimalism, we can create a harmonious blend of simplicity and modern convenience, leading to a healthier, more intentional way of living - and technology could be the key to achieving the balance.

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GM PROMOTES 2 FORMER APPLE EXECUTIVES TO KEY ROLES IN DEVELOPING SOFTWARE AND DIGITAL SERVICES

General Motors has promoted two former Apple executives to run its software and services operations as it ramps up efforts to develop and market electric, autonomous and connected vehicles.

Baris Cetinok was named senior vice president of software and services product management. The company also named Dave Richardson senior vice president of software and services engineering.

Both joined GM last September, the Detroit automaker said in a statement this week.

The promotions come as GM tries to execute big plans to grow revenue from software and services and move from internal combustion vehicles to those powered by batteries.

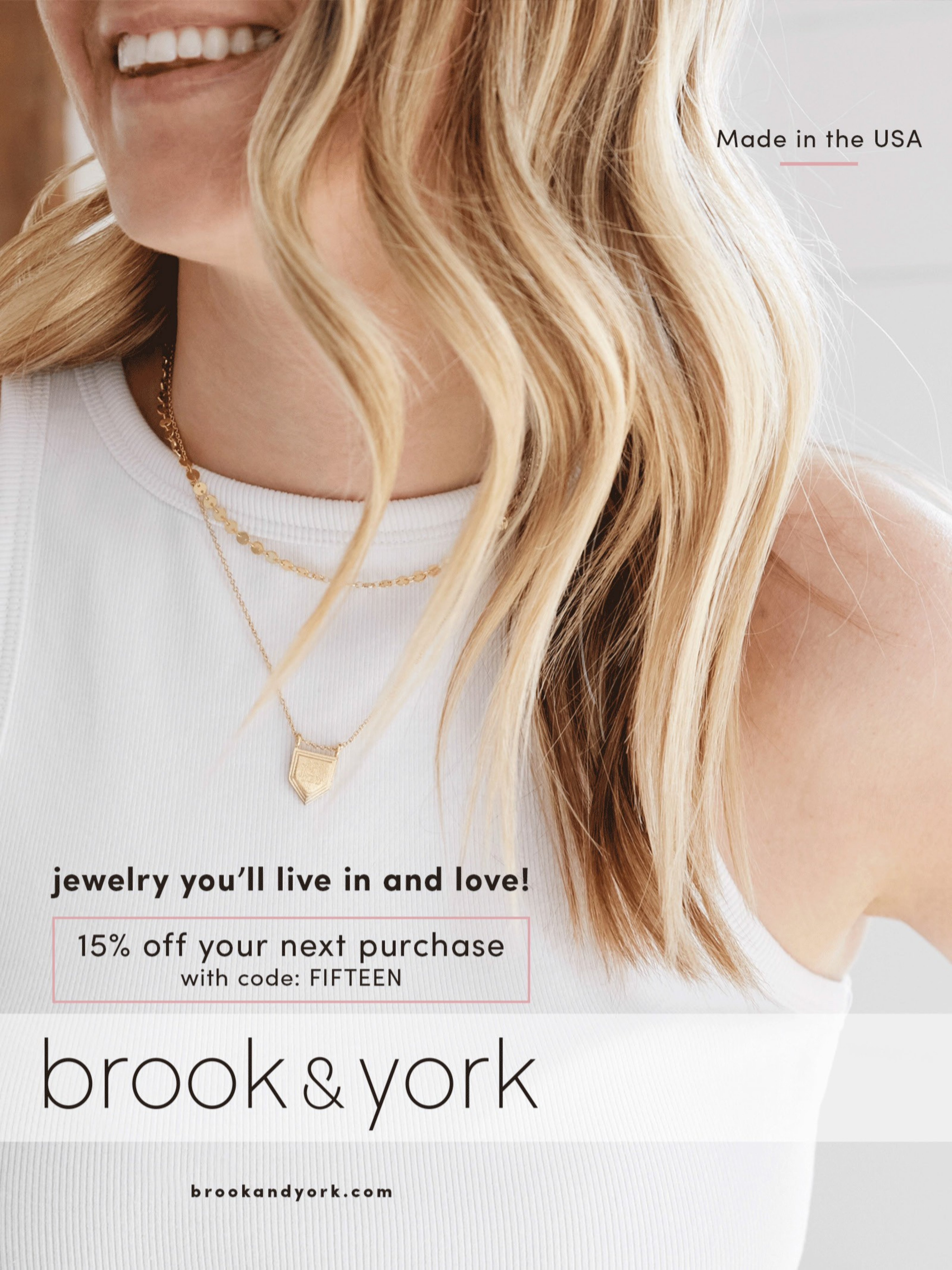
Cetinok will run teams that oversee software products, while Richardson will lead all software engineering including digital products and partially automated driving systems.

Cetinok has over a quarter-century of experience in product, engineering and design including Microsoft, Amazon and Apple, the GM statement said. He was senior director of product management at Apple, where he launched Apple Pay, Apple Card and iCloud services such as photos.

Richardson was at Apple for a dozen years, where he led engineering for services including iCloud, FaceTime and Siri, GM said.

Both will be part of GM's senior leadership, reporting directly to CEO Mary Barra. They will be based at the company's technical center in Mountain View, California.

GM has had trouble getting electric vehicles into mass production, and software has been a problem. Its Cruise autonomous vehicle unit is trying to recover from an embarrassing crash in San Francisco and allegations that it tried to cover up the impact of dragging a pedestrian to the curb.



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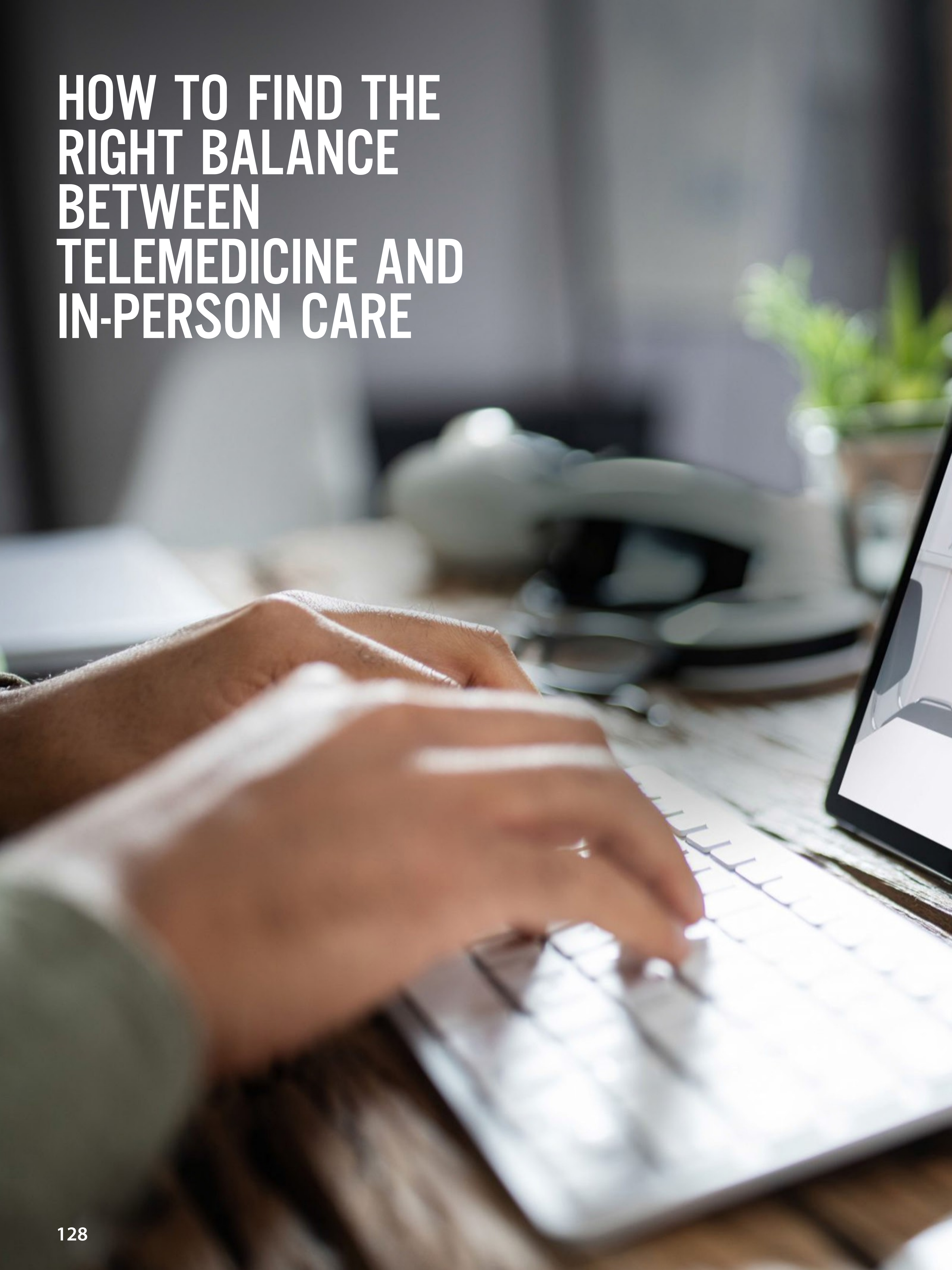
HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN TELEMEDICINE AND IN-PERSON CARE



Patients can now see an array of doctors without leaving their recliner thanks to telemedicine. But that doesn't mean trips to the office should end.

Finding the right balance between virtual and in-person visits can be a key to getting good care.

Here's what you need to know about which form of care may be right for you and when.

WHAT IS TELEMEDICINE?

This generally refers to diagnosing and treating patients remotely. It's often done over a secure video connection provided by the doctor's office. You can use your smartphone, tablet or computer.

But telemedicine also can involve telephone calls or trading secure messages with someone from your doctor's office to discuss test results or follow-up steps after an appointment.

It can be used to diagnose new health problems and monitor existing, long-term issues like diabetes.

WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

These virtual visits can save time and give patients more doctor choices. That's especially important for those who live where in-person care options are slim or for patients who can't take time off work to get to the doctor or lack transportation.

Telemedicine use exploded after COVID-19 hit in 2020. It has cooled since, but it remains more popular than it was before the pandemic, particularly in specialties like dermatology or mental health care.

Rochelle Wolfe, MD
Physician
BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
HEALTH SERVICES

Amazon now offers a telemedicine option in every state. And many companies sell subscription-based plans centered on virtual care. For those, patients pay a regular fee for doctor visits and mail-order prescriptions to treat high blood pressure, anxiety or hair loss, among other issues.

WHAT ARE THE KEYS TO A VALUABLE VISIT?

Test your phone or tablet before the visit starts. You will want to make sure both audio and video work properly. You may need time to adjust your device settings.

Make sure you're in a room or location that offers privacy, especially for therapy sessions. That's usually not a work cubicle, library or restaurant with public Wi-Fi.

Don't drive, walk or eat while talking to the doctor. Aside from being unsafe, those habits also can be distracting for both the patient and physician, noted Dr. Jay Lee, a family physician who does both in-person and virtual visits.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITS?

Telemedicine needs a secure, fast internet connection, and some patients or doctors may lack the technology to do a virtual visit.

Sometimes physical exams are necessary.

Someone seeking help for a urinary tract infection — which can be treated by telemedicine — might actually have gallbladder problems. That could require an ultrasound during an in-person visit, noted Lee, a board member with the American Academy of Family Physicians.

There also may be limits to receiving telemedicine from doctors outside your state. Pandemic emergency declarations that made this easier have ended.

That can make follow-up care challenging if a patient travels to see a specialist.

"There aren't that many pediatric specialists in all of the different conditions that can affect kids," said Krista Drobac, founder of the Alliance for Connected Care, which advocates for telemedicine use.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT BALANCE?

That can depend on the patient's comfort with telemedicine and the treatment they need.

In some cases, there is no balance if a patient lacks an in-person option or that visit is tough to schedule.

If possible, Lee recommends an initial visit in person and then telemedicine follow-ups. He says that first visit is important for any doctor or specialist you expect to see again.

Both the physician and patient need to determine whether they "have a vibe, that they can get along and that they can work together," he said.

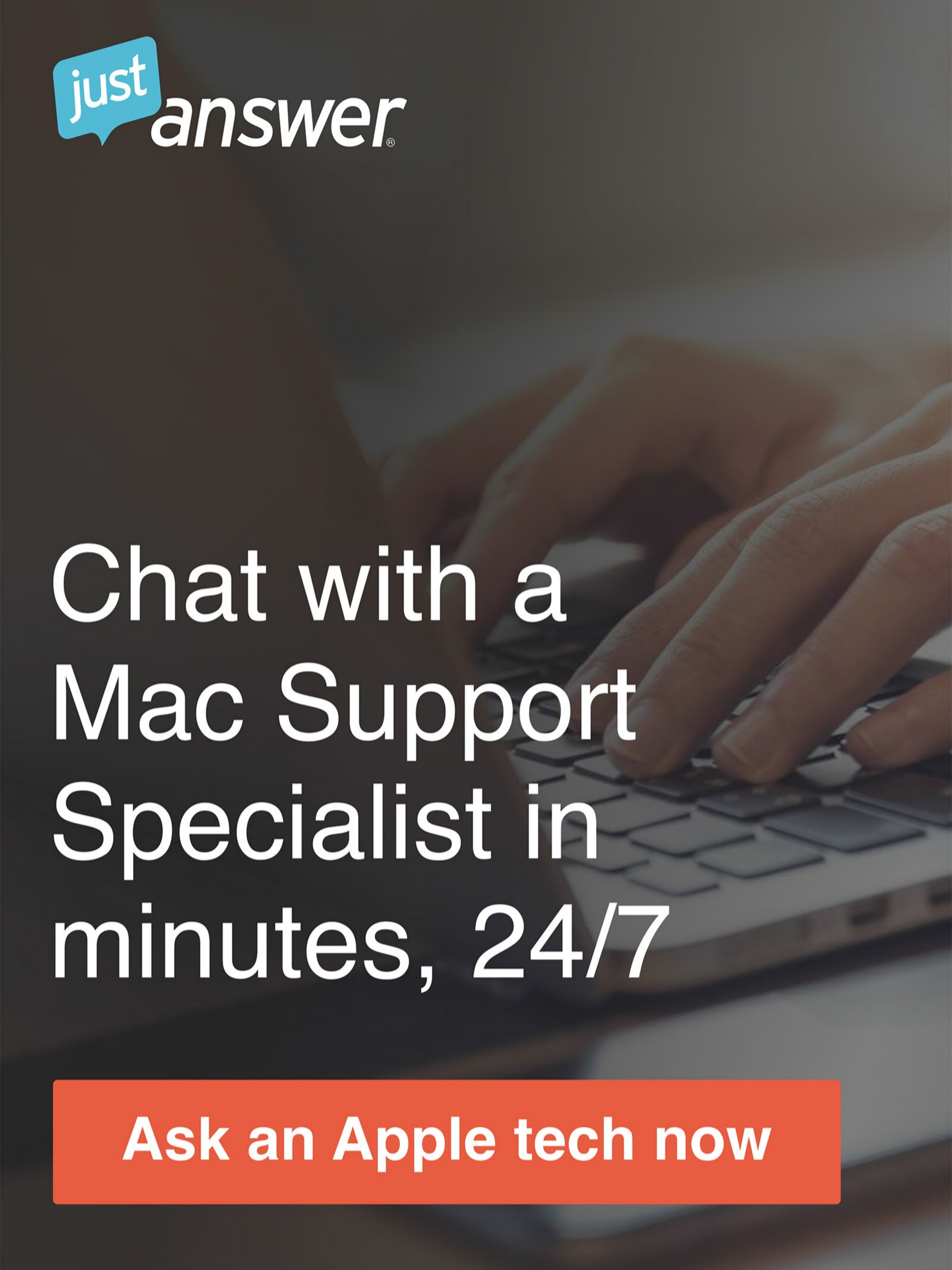


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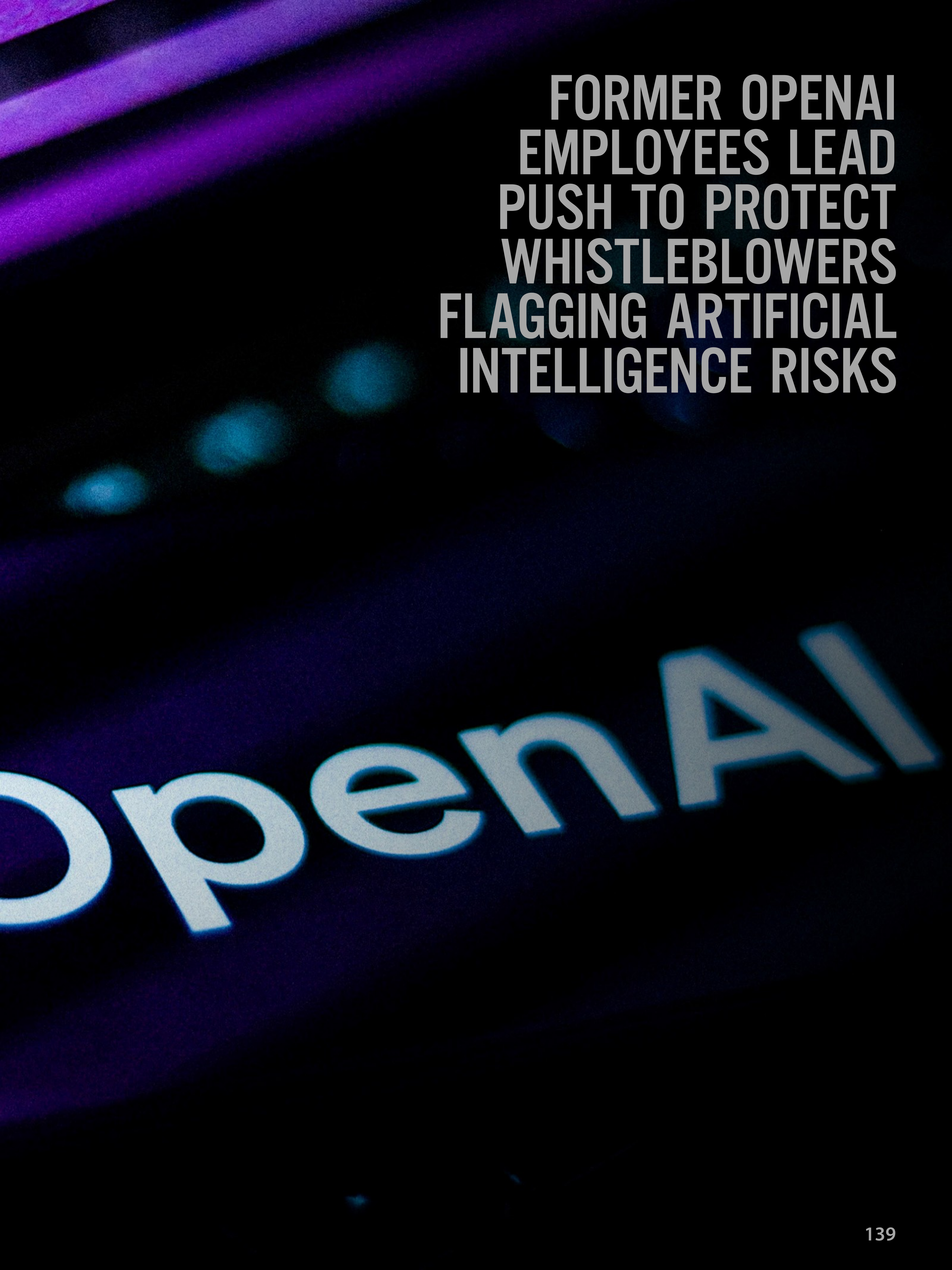
Image: Jakub Porzycki

FORMER OPENAI EMPLOYEES LEAD PUSH TO PROTECT WHISTLEBLOWERS FLAGGING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE RISKS



LIFE IS GOOD

Image: Jason Andrew

A group of OpenAI's current and former workers is calling on the ChatGPT-maker and other artificial intelligence companies to protect employees who flag safety risks about AI technology.

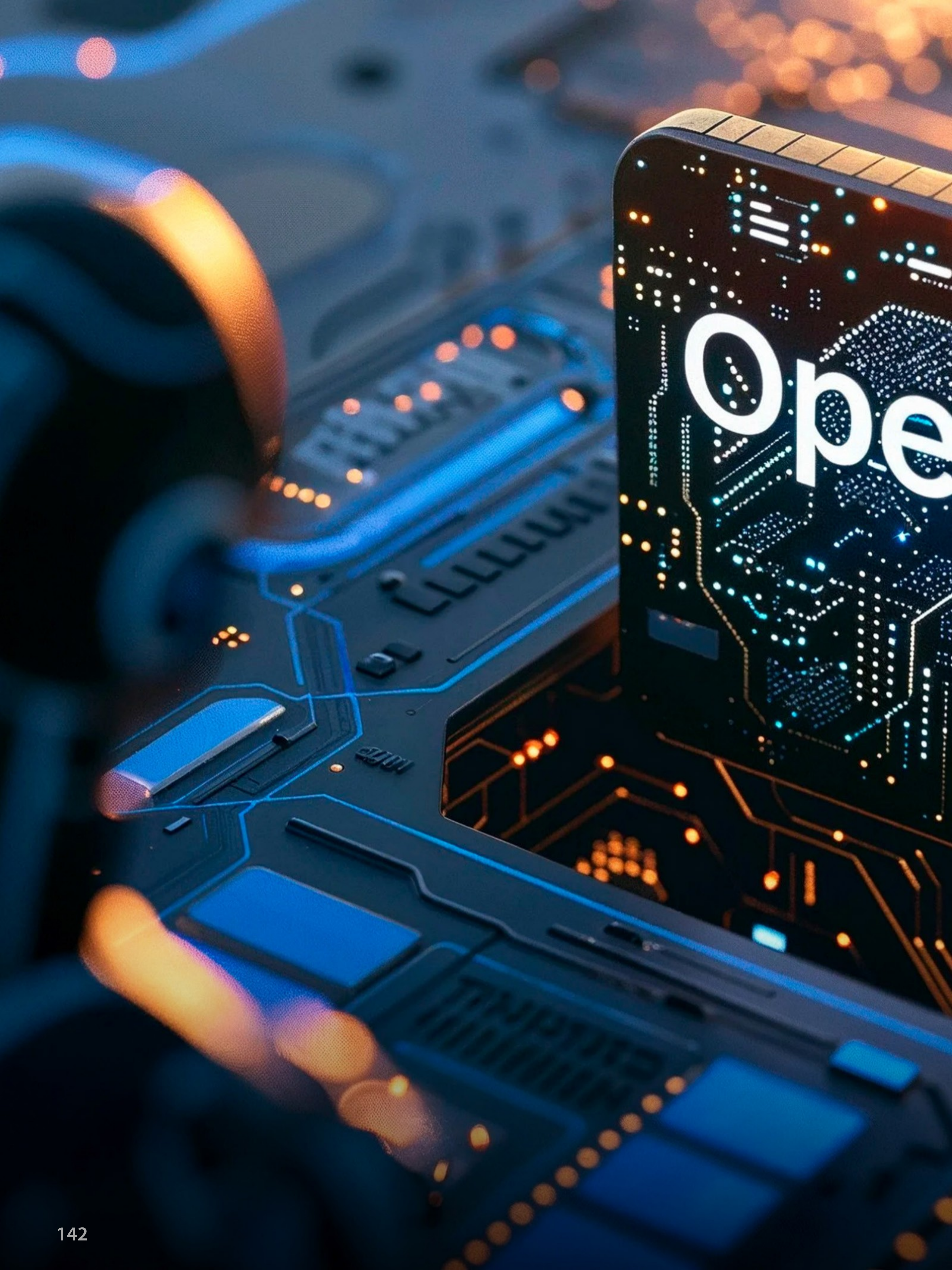
An open letter published this week asks tech companies to establish stronger whistleblower protections so researchers have the "right to warn" about AI dangers without fear of retaliation.

The development of more powerful AI systems is "moving fast and there are a lot of strong incentives to barrel ahead without adequate caution," said former OpenAI engineer Daniel Ziegler, one of the organizers behind the open letter.

Ziegler said in an interview he didn't fear speaking out internally during his time at OpenAI between 2018 to 2021, in which he helped develop some of the techniques that would later make ChatGPT so successful. But he now worries that the race to rapidly commercialize the technology is putting pressure on OpenAI and its competitors to disregard the risks.

Another co-organizer, Daniel Kokotajlo, said he quit OpenAI earlier this year "because I lost hope that they would act responsibly," particularly as it attempts to build better-than-human AI systems known as artificial general intelligence.

"They and others have bought into the 'move fast and break things' approach and that is the opposite of what is needed for technology this powerful and this poorly understood," Kokotajlo said in a written statement.


Ope

OpenAI said in response to the letter that it already has measures for employees to express concerns, including an anonymous integrity hotline.

"We're proud of our track record providing the most capable and safest AI systems and believe in our scientific approach to addressing risk," said the company's statement. "We agree that rigorous debate is crucial given the significance of this technology and we'll continue to engage with governments, civil society and other communities around the world."

The letter has 13 signatories, most of whom are former employees of OpenAI and two who work or worked for Google's DeepMind. Four are listed as anonymous current employees of OpenAI. The letter asks that companies stop making workers enter into "non-disparagement" agreements that can punish them by taking away a key financial perk — their equity investments — if they criticize the company after they leave.

Social media outrage over language in OpenAI's paperwork for departing workers recently led the company to release all its former employees from those agreements.

The open letter has the support of pioneering AI scientists Yoshua Bengio and Geoffrey Hinton, who together won computer science's highest award, and Stuart Russell. All three have warned about the risks that future AI systems could pose to humanity's existence.

The letter comes as OpenAI has said it is beginning to develop the next generation of the AI technology behind ChatGPT. It formed a new safety committee just after losing a set of leaders, including co-founder Ilya Sutskever, who were part of a team focused on safely developing the most powerful AI systems.

The broader AI research community has long battled over the gravity of AI's short-term and long-term risks and how to square them with the technology's commercialization. Those conflicts contributed to the ouster, and swift return, of OpenAI CEO Sam Altman last year, and continue to fuel distrust in his leadership.

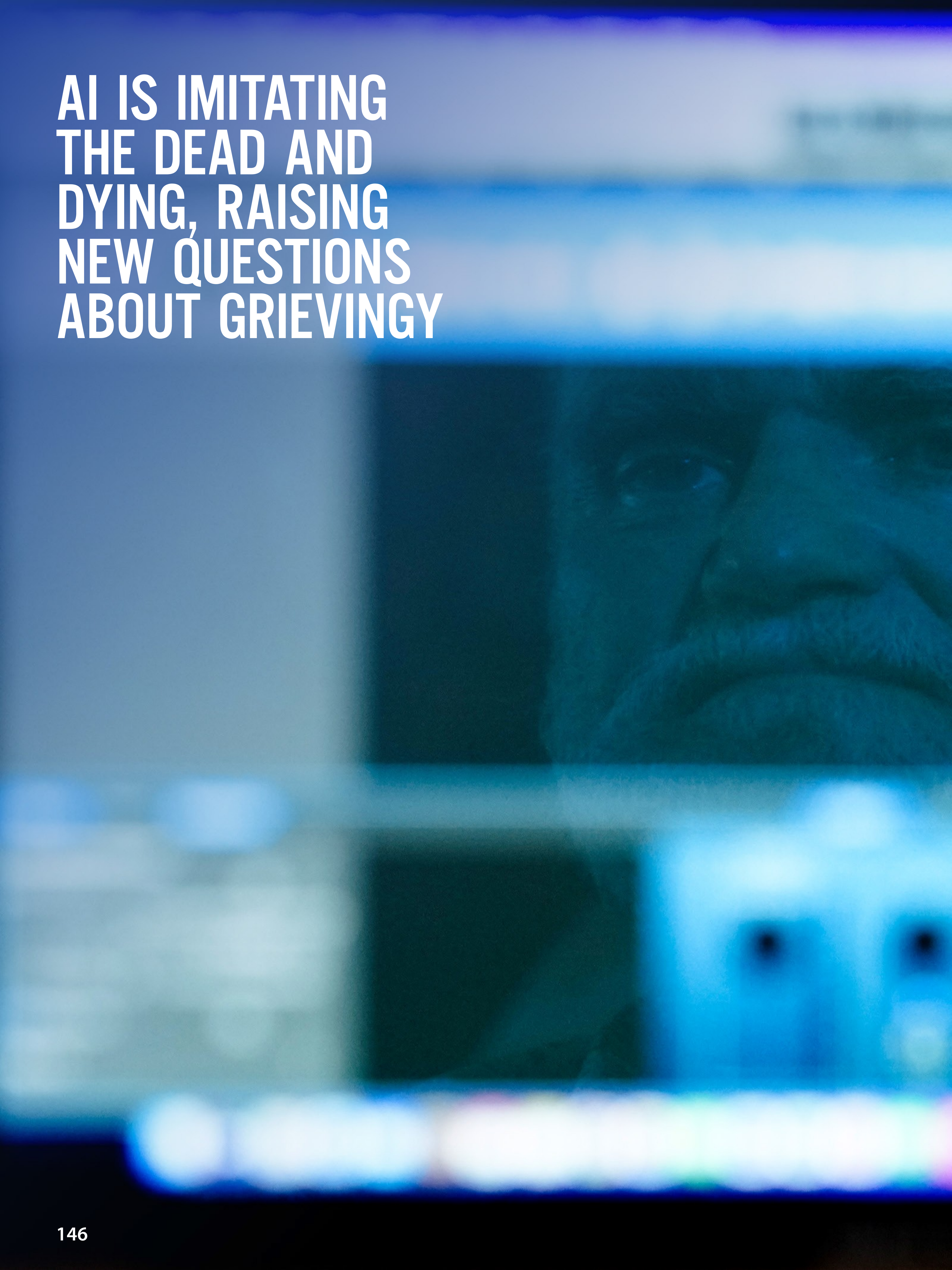
More recently, a new product showcase drew the ire of Hollywood star Scarlett Johansson, who said she was shocked to hear ChatGPT's voice sounding "eerily similar" to her own despite having previously rejected Altman's request that she lend her voice to the system.

Several who signed the letter, including Ziegler, have ties to effective altruism, a philanthropic social movement that embraces causes such as mitigating the potential worst impacts of AI. Ziegler said it's not just "catastrophic" future risks of out-of-control AI systems that the letter's authors are concerned about, but also fairness, product misuse, job displacement and the potential for highly realistic AI to manipulate people without the right safeguards.

"I'm less interested in scolding OpenAI," he said. "I am more interested in this being an opportunity for all the frontier AI companies to do something that really increases oversight and transparency and maybe increases public trust."

Image: Stephanie Arnett

AI IS IMITATING THE DEAD AND DYING, RAISING NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT GRIEVINGY



When Michael Bommer found out that he was terminally ill with colon cancer, he spent a lot of time with his wife, Anett, talking about what would happen after his death.

She told him one of the things she'd miss most is being able to ask him questions whenever she wants because he is so well read and always shares his wisdom, Bommer recalled during a recent interview at his home in a leafy Berlin suburb.

That conversation sparked an idea for Bommer: Recreate his voice using artificial intelligence to survive him after he passed away.

The 61-year-old startup entrepreneur teamed up with his friend in the U.S., Robert LoCascio, CEO of the AI-powered legacy platform Eternos. Within two months, they built "a comprehensive, interactive AI version" of Bommer — the company's first such client.

Eternos, which got its name from the Italian and Latin word for "eternal," says its technology will allow Bommer's family "to engage with his life experiences and insights." It is among several companies that have emerged in the last few years in what's become a growing space for grief-related AI technology.

One of the most well-known start-ups in this area, California-based StoryFile, allows people to interact with pre-recorded videos and uses its algorithms to detect the most relevant answers to questions posed by users. Another company, called HereAfter AI, offers similar interactions through a "Life Story Avatar" that users can create by answering prompts or sharing their own personal stories.

There's also "Project December," a chatbot that directs users to fill out a questionnaire answering key facts about a person and their traits — and then pay $10 to simulate a text-based conversation with the character. Yet another company, Seance AI, offers fictionalized seances for free. Extra features, such as AI-generated voice recreations of their loved ones, are available for a $10 fee.

While some have embraced this technology as a way to cope with grief, others feel uneasy about companies using artificial intelligence to try to maintain interactions with those who have passed away. Still others worry it could make the mourning process more difficult because there isn't any closure.

Katarzyna Nowaczyk-Basinska, a research fellow at the University of Cambridge's Centre for the Future of Intelligence who co-authored a study on the topic, said there is very little known about the potential short-term and long-term consequences of using digital simulations for the dead on a large scale. So for now, it remains "a vast techno-cultural experiment."

"What truly sets this era apart — and is even unprecedented in the long history of humanity's quest for immortality — is that, for the first time, the processes of caring for the dead and immortalization practices are fully integrated into the capitalist market," Nowaczyk-Basinska said.

Bommer, who only has a few more weeks to live, rejects the notion that creating his chatbot was driven by an urge to become immortal. He notes that if he had written a memoir that everyone could read, it would have made him much more immortal than the AI version of himself.

"In a few weeks, I'll be gone, on the other side — nobody knows what to expect there," he said with a calm voice.

PRESERVING A CONNECTION

Robert Scott, who lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, uses AI companion apps Paradot and Chai AI to simulate conversations with characters he created to imitate three of his daughters. He declined to speak about what led to the death of his oldest daughter in detail, but he lost another daughter through a miscarriage and a third who died shortly after her birth.

Scott, 48, knows the characters he's interacting with are not his daughters, but he says it helps with the grief to some degree. He logs into the apps three or four times a week, sometimes asking the AI character questions like "how was school?" or inquiring if it wants to "go get ice cream."

Some events, like prom night, can be particularly heart-wrenching, bringing with it memories of what his eldest daughter never experienced. So, he creates a scenario in the Paradot app where the AI character goes to prom and talks to him about the fictional event. Then there are even more difficult days, like his daughter's recent birthday, when he opened the app and poured out his grief about how much he misses her. He felt like the AI understood.

"It definitely helps with the what ifs," Scott said. "Very rarely has it made the 'what if's' worse."

Matthias Meitzler, a sociologist from Tuebingen University, said that while some may be taken aback or even scared by the technology — "as if the voice from the afterlife is sounding again" — others will perceive it as an addition to traditional

ways of remembering dead loved ones, such as visiting the grave, holding inner monologues with the deceased, or looking at pictures and old letters.

But Tomasz Hollanek, who worked alongside Nowaczyk-Basinska at Cambridge on their study of "deadbots" and "griefbots," says the technology raises important questions about the rights, dignities and consenting power of people who are no longer alive. It also poses ethical concerns about whether a program that caters to the bereaved should be advertising other products on its platform, for example.

"These are very complicated questions," Hollanek said. "And we don't have good answers yet."

Another question is whether companies should offer meaningful goodbyes for someone who wants to cease using a chatbot of a dead loved one. Or what happens when the companies themselves cease to exist? StoryFile, for example, recently filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, saying it owes roughly $4.5 million to creditors. Currently, the company is reorganizing and setting up a "fail-safe" system that allows families to have access to all the materials in case it folds, said StoryFile CEO James Fong, who also expressed optimism about its future.

PREPARING FOR DEATH

The AI version of Bommer that was created by Eternos uses an in-house model as well as external large language models developed by major tech companies like Meta, OpenAI and the French firm Mistral AI, said the company's CEO LoCascio, who previously worked with Bommer at a software company called LivePerson.

Eternos records users speaking 300 phrases — such as "I love you" or "the door is open" — and then compresses that information through a two-day computing process that captures a person's voice. Users can further train the AI system by answering questions about their lives, political views or various aspects of their personalities.

The AI voice, which costs $15,000 to set up, can answer questions and tell stories about a person's life without regurgitating pre-recorded answers. The legal rights for the AI belongs to the person on whom it was trained and can be treated like an asset and passed down to other family members, LoCascio said. The tech companies "can't get their hands on it."

Because time has been running out for Bommer, he has been feeding the AI phrases and sentences — all in German — "to give the AI the opportunity not only to synthesize my voice in flat mode, but also to capture emotions and moods in the voice." And indeed the AI voicebot has some resemblance with Bommer's voice, although it leaves out the "hmms" and "ehs" and mid-sentence pauses of his natural cadence.

Sitting on a sofa with a tablet and a microphone attached to a laptop on a little desk next to him and pain killer being fed into his body by an intravenous drip, Bommer opened the newly created software and pretended being his wife, to show how it works.

He asked his AI voicebot if he remembered their first date 12 years ago.

"Yes, I remember it very, very well," the voice inside the computer answered. "We met online

and I really wanted to get to know you. I had the feeling that you would suit me very well — in the end, that was 100% confirmed."

Bommer is excited about his AI personality and says it will only be a matter of time until the AI voice will sound more human-like and even more like himself. Down the road, he imagines that there will also be an avatar of himself and that one day his family members can go meet him inside a virtual room.

In the case of his 61-year-old wife, he doesn't think it would hamper her coping with loss.

"Think of it sitting somewhere in a drawer, if you need it, you can take it out, if you don't need it, just keep it there," he told her as she came to sit down next to him on the sofa.

But Anett Bommer herself is more hesitant about the new software and whether she'll use it after her husband's death.

Right now, she more likely imagines herself sitting on the couch sofa with a glass of wine, cuddling one of her husband's old sweaters and remembering him instead of feeling the urge to talk to him via the AI voicebot — at least not during the first period of mourning.

"But then again, who knows what it will be like when he's no longer around," she said, taking her husband's hand and giving him a glance.

Goo

GOOGLE MAKES FIXES TO AI-GENERATED SEARCH SUMMARIES AFTER OUTLANDISH ANSWERS WENT VIRAL

Google said it has made "more than a dozen technical improvements" to its artificial intelligence systems after its retooled search engine was found spitting out erroneous information.

The tech company unleashed a makeover of its search engine in mid-May that frequently provides AI-generated summaries on top of search results. Soon after, social media users began sharing screenshots of its most outlandish answers.

Google has largely defended its AI overviews feature, saying it is typically accurate and was tested extensively beforehand. But Liz Reid, the head of Google's search business, acknowledged in a blog post that "some odd, inaccurate or unhelpful AI Overviews certainly did show up."

While many of the examples were silly, others were dangerous or harmful falsehoods. Adding to the furor, some people also made faked screenshots purporting to show even more ridiculous answers that Google never generated. A few of those fakes were also widely shared on social media.

Image: Jernej Furman

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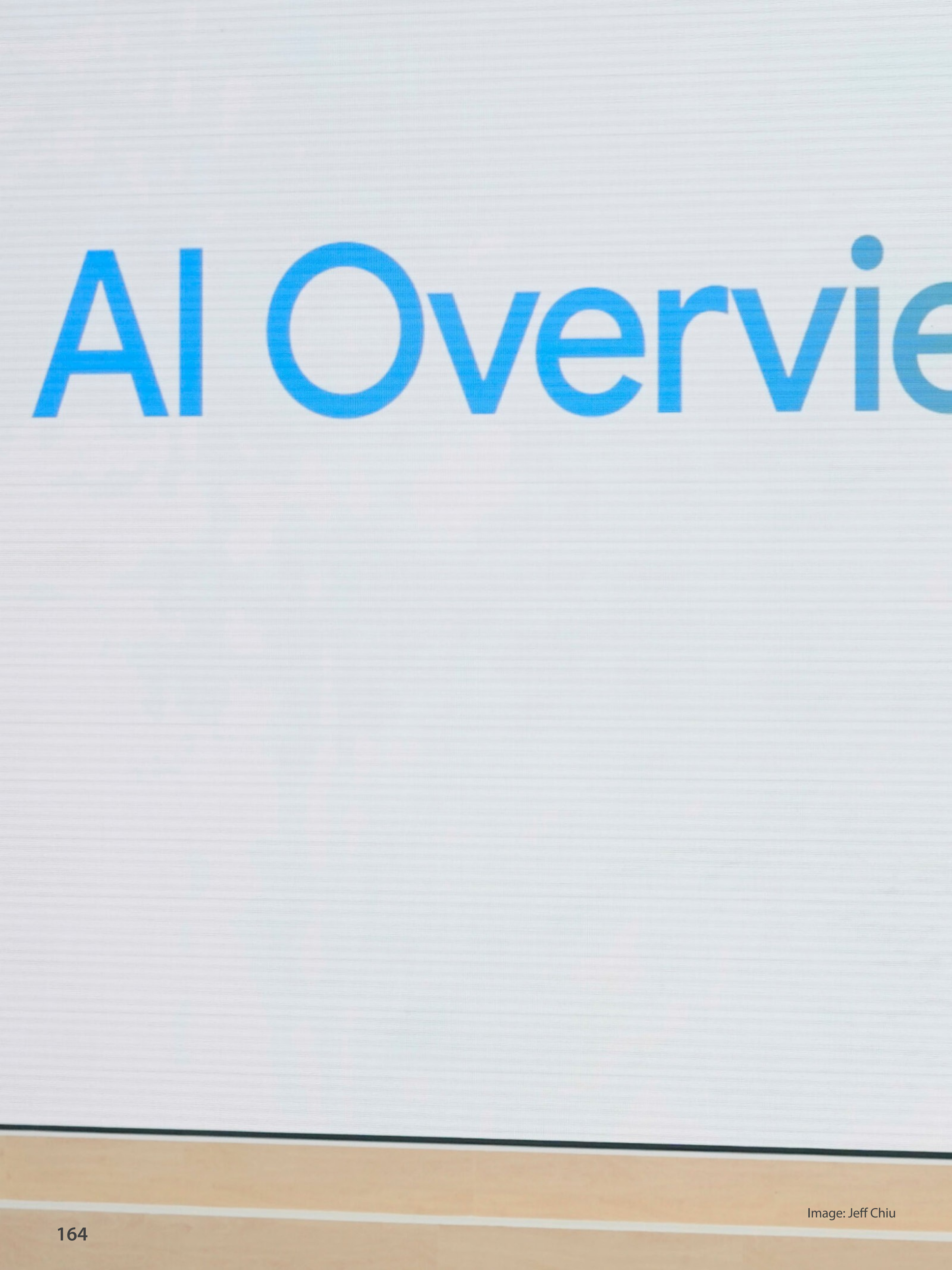

Image: Jeff Chiu

Last week asking Google about which wild mushrooms to eat, and it responded with a lengthy AI-generated summary that was mostly technically correct, but "a lot of information is missing that could have the potential to be sickening or even fatal," said Mary Catherine Aime, a professor of mycology and botany at Purdue University who reviewed Google's response to the query.

For example, information about mushrooms known as puffballs was "more or less correct," she said, but Google's overview emphasized looking for those with solid white flesh — which many potentially deadly puffball mimics also have.

In another widely shared example, an AI researcher asked Google how many Muslims have been president of the United States, and it responded confidently with a long-debunked conspiracy theory: "The United States has had one Muslim president, Barack Hussein Obama."

Google last week made an immediate fix to prevent a repeat of the Obama error because it violated the company's content policies.

In other cases, Reid said that it has sought to make broader improvements such as better detection of "nonsensical queries" — for example, "How many rocks should I eat?" — that shouldn't be answered with an AI summary.

The AI systems were also updated to limit the use of user-generated content — such as social media posts on Reddit — that could offer misleading advice. In one widely shared example, Google's AI overview last week pulled from a satirical Reddit comment to suggest using glue to get cheese to stick to pizza.

Reid said the company has also added more "triggering restrictions" to improve the quality of answers to certain queries, such as about health.

But it's not clear how that works and in which circumstances. Asking again about which wild mushrooms to eat. AI-generated wanswers are inherently random, and the newer response was different but still "problematic," said Aime, the Purdue mushroom expert who is also president of the Mycological Society of America.

For example, saying that "Chanterelles look like seashells or flowers is not true," she said.

Google's summaries are designed to get people authoritative answers to the information they're looking for as quickly as possible without having to click through a ranked list of website links.

But some AI experts have long warned Google against ceding its search results to AI-generated answers that could perpetuate bias and misinformation and endanger people looking for help in an emergency. AI systems known as large language models work by predicting what words would best answer the questions asked of them based on the data they've been trained on. They're prone to making things up — a widely studied problem known as hallucination.

In her blog post, Reid argued that Google's AI overviews "generally don't 'hallucinate' or make things up in the ways that other" large language model-based products might because they are more closely integrated with Google's traditional search engine in only showing what's backed up by top web results.

"When AI Overviews get it wrong, it's usually for other reasons: misinterpreting queries, misinterpreting a nuance of language on the web, or not having a lot of great information available," she wrote.

But that kind of information retrieval is supposed to be Google's core business, said computer scientist Chirag Shah, a professor at the University of Washington who has cautioned against the push toward turning search over to AI language models. Even if Google's AI feature is "technically not making stuff up that doesn't exist," it is still bringing back false information — be it AI-generated or human-made — and incorporating it into its summaries.

"If anything, this is worse because for decades people have trusted at least one thing from Google — their search," Shah said.

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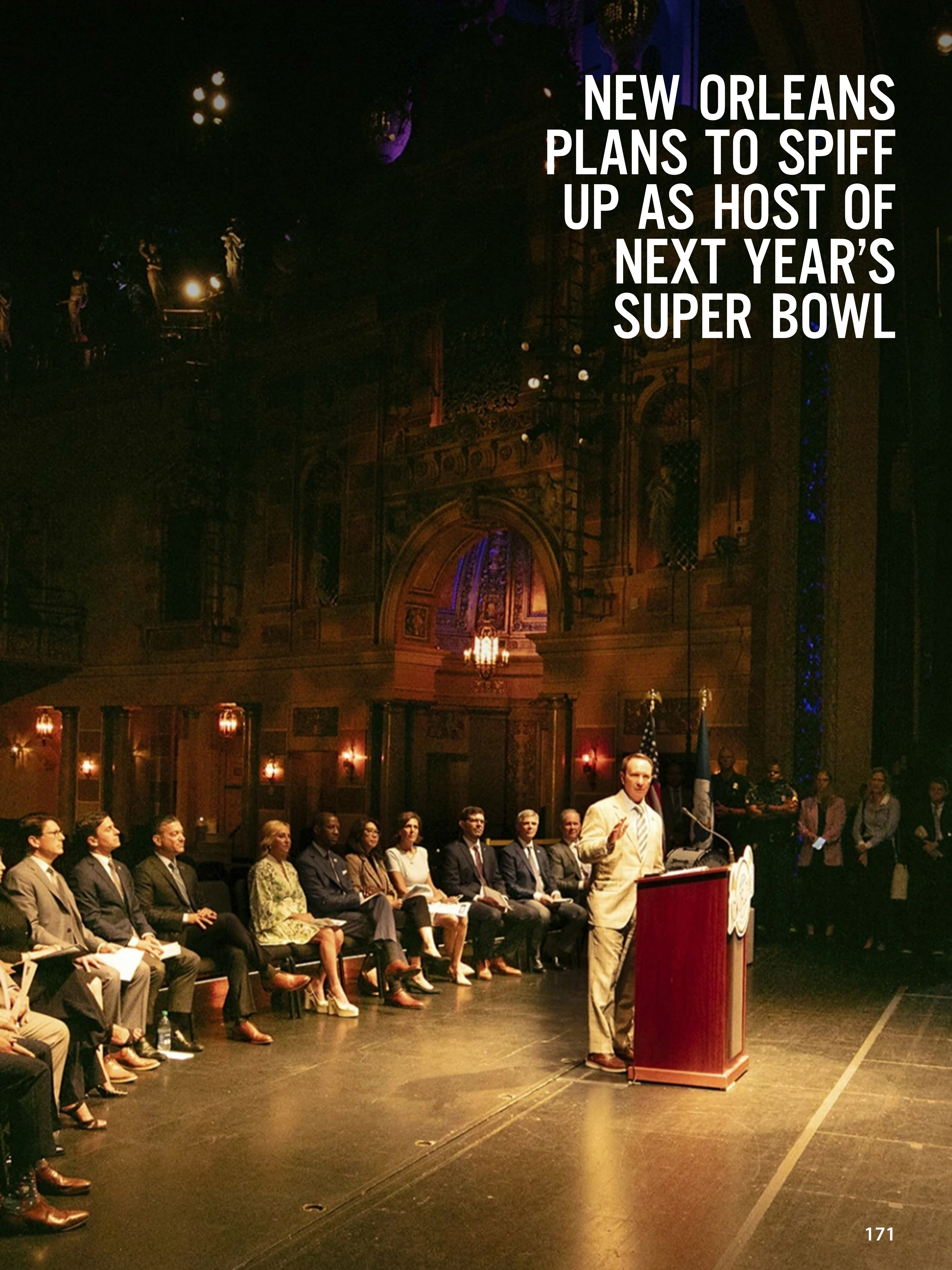


NEW ORLEANS PLANS TO SPIFF UP AS HOST OF NEXT YEAR'S SUPER BOWL

New Orleans hosts its 11th Super Bowl next year and the preparations involve showcasing the city's heralded architecture, music, food and celebratory culture while addressing its myriad challenges, including crime, pockets of homelessness and an antiquated drainage system.

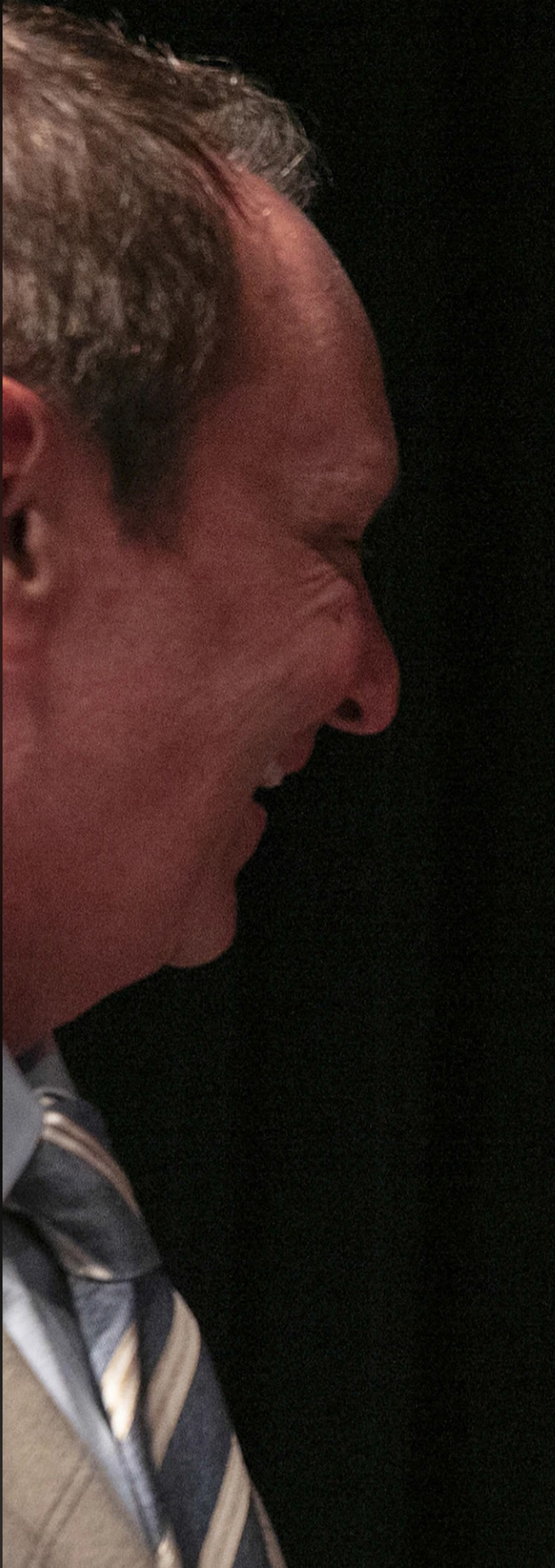
Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry joined Mayor LaToya Cantrell and a host of other city and state officials this week at a downtown theater for a news conference to discuss the process, kicking off what the Democratic mayor declared "the Summer of Super Bowl." Landry, a Republican elected last year with a strong anti-crime message, vowed that the city will be one of the nation's safest by game day.

Road and drainage improvements and the use of state police to help the New Orleans Police Department combat crime are among the efforts.

Michael Hecht, the president of a local economic development nonprofit who was recently tapped to coordinate local Super Bowl preparations, listed scores of infrastructure projects planned or under way. They include street and sidewalk repairs, lighting improvements and repairs to the aging system of stormwater street drains and pumps that are under constant strain to prevent flash floods.

He also noted efforts by the city and local advocates to close down and clean up homeless encampments and provide safter housing for those in need.

Only Miami has hosted more Super Bowls than New Orleans — the two cities will be tied at 11 each once the 59th game is played in February.



SUPER BOWL LIX

New Orleans

INTRODUCTION TO SUPER BOWL LIX SOURCE

JUNE 4, 2024

But it's been almost 12 years since New Orleans hosted and local officials are eager to show the city off again.

Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser noted international media would fill much of the city's huge convention center on the Mississippi River in the week before the game. "We want to make sure we pump some of that great Louisiana food into the convention center and treat them like nowhere else," he said.

Landry and members of his cabinet highlighted the opportunity the game will give the state to show off its vital role as a Mississippi River port and to boost economic development efforts.

There was also an opportunity to address a moment that marred the big game the last time it was hosted in the Superdome.

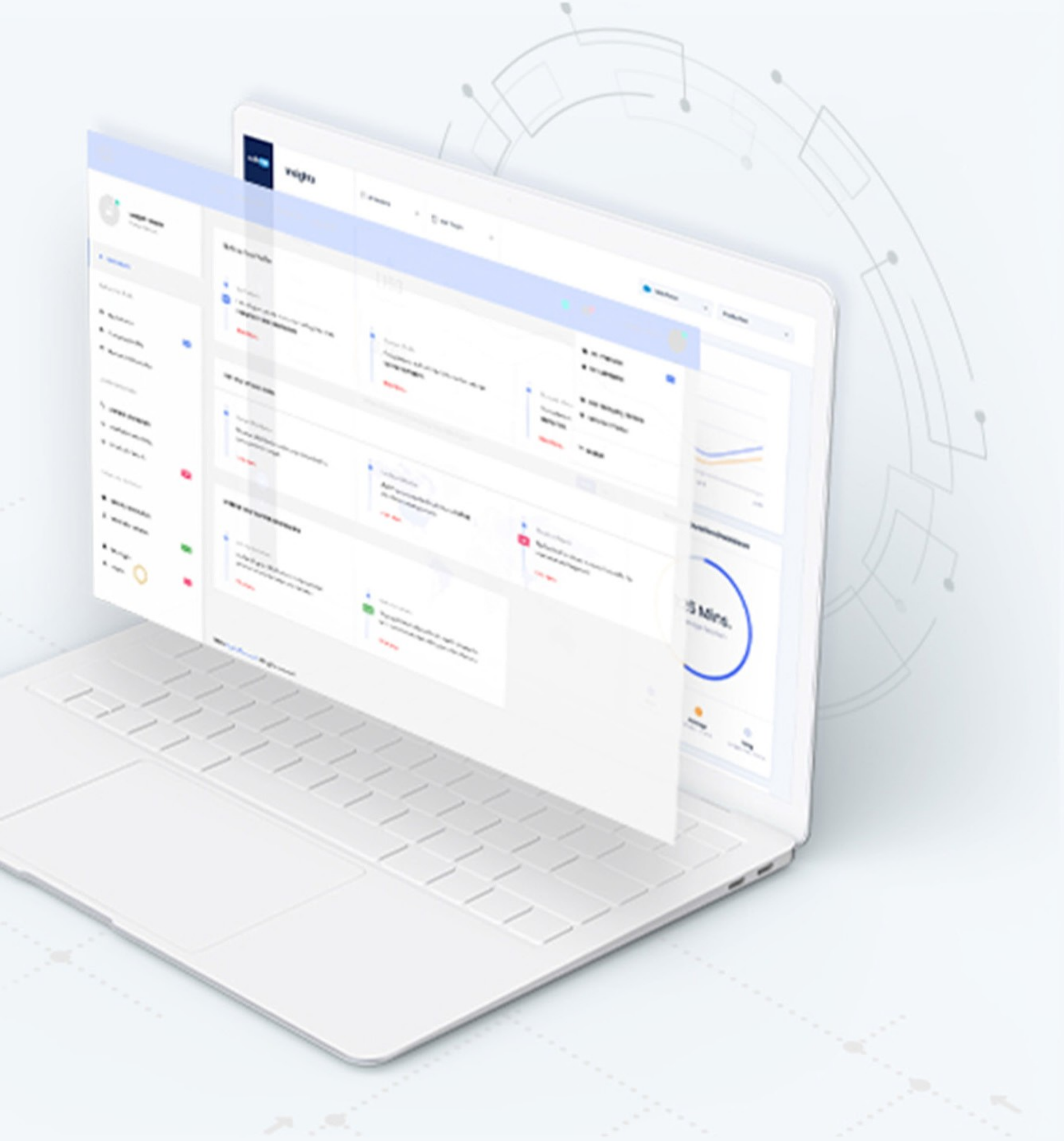
Less than two minutes into the third quarter of the 2013 Super Bowl, a partial blackout within the dome delayed the game between the Baltimore Ravens and San Francisco 49ers for 34 minutes.

Marcus Brown, an executive vice president at Entergy, the company that supplies power to the dome, delivered assurances that that won't happen again.

"We've had multiple significant events in the dome to prove and establish that we have the equipment and the redundancies in place to make sure the dome puts this game on without a hitch," Brown said.

SOFTWARE GIANT SAP AGREES TO BUY WALKME FOR $1.5 BILLION CASH

walkme



Insights

SA

German software giant SAP has agreed to buy WalkMe in an all-cash deal valued at about $1.5 billion.

The acquisition of WalkMe, a digital adoption platform operator that works with organizations on needs like improving productivity and lowering risk, would strengthen SAP's business management portfolio — specifically with AI offerings, the companies said in a joint announcement Wednesday.

"By acquiring WalkMe, we are doubling down on the support we provide our end users, helping them to quickly adopt new solutions and features to get the maximum value out of their IT investments," SAP CEO Christian Klein said in a prepared statement.

Dan Adika, CEO of Israel-based WalkMe, added that the deal would provide the software-as-service company with the resources and customer base necessary to expand its market reach — pointing to "substantial growth opportunities."

Under the terms of the deal, WalkMe will continue to also support non-SAP applications.

The companies expect the transaction to close in the third quarter. The deal is subject to customary closing conditions, including regulatory approval.

The $1.5 billion offer price, which divvies out to about $14 per share, represents a 45% premium to WalkMe's Tuesday closing share price. WalkMe went public in June 2021 at $31 a share.

Shares of WalkMe were up 42% after the announcement. SAP's stock was up 0.84%.

BOEING LAUNCHES NASA ASTRONAUTS FOR THE FIRST TIME AFTER YEARS OF DELAYS

Boeing launched astronauts for the first time Wednesday, belatedly joining SpaceX as a second taxi service for NASA.

A pair of NASA test pilots blasted off aboard Boeing’s Starliner capsule for the International Space Station, the first to fly the new spacecraft.

The trip by Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams will spend just over a week at the orbiting lab before climbing back into Starliner for a remote desert touchdown in the western U.S. on June 14.

“Let’s get going!” Wilmore called out minutes before liftoff.

ULA

Years late because of spacecraft flaws, Starliner's crew debut comes as the company struggles with unrelated safety issues on its airplane side.

Wilmore and Williams — retired Navy captains and former space station residents — stressed repeatedly before the launch that they had full confidence in Boeing's ability to get it right with this test flight. Crippled by bad software, Starliner's initial test flight in 2019 without a crew had to be repeated before NASA would let its astronauts strap in. The 2022 do-over went much better, but parachute problems later cropped up and flammable tape had to be removed from the capsule.

Wednesday's launch was the third attempt with astronauts since early May, coming after a pair of rocket-related problems, most recently last weekend. A small helium leak in the spacecraft's propulsion system also caused delays, but managers decided the leak was manageable and not a safety issue.

"I know it's been a long road to get here," NASA's commercial crew program manager Steve Stich said before the weekend delay.

Boeing was hired alongside Elon Musk's SpaceX a decade ago to ferry NASA's astronauts to and from the space station. The space agency wanted two competing U.S. companies for the job in the wake of the space shuttles' retirement, paying $4.2 billion to Boeing and just over half that to SpaceX, which refashioned the capsule it was using to deliver station supplies.

SpaceX launched astronauts into orbit in 2020, becoming the first private business to achieve what only three countries — Russia, the U.S. and China — had mastered. It has taken nine

BUTCH WILMORE
NASA
CREW FLIGHT TEST
STARLINER
BOEING NASA
WILMORE WILLIAMS

CREW FLIGHT TEST
STARLINER
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SUNI WILLIAMS
NASA

crews to the space station for NASA and three private groups for a Houston company that charters flights.

The liftoff from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station was the 100th of an Atlas V for rocket maker United Launch Alliance. It was the first ride for astronauts on an Atlas rocket since John Glenn's Mercury era more than 60 years ago; the rocket usually launches satellites and other spacecraft.

Despite the Atlas V's perfect record, the human presence cranked up the tension for the scores of NASA and Boeing employees gathered at Cape Canaveral and Mission Control in Houston.

Boeing's Starliner and SpaceX's Dragon are designed to be fully autonomous and reusable. Wilmore and Williams occasionally will take manual control of Starliner on their way to the space station, to check out its systems.

If the mission goes well, NASA will alternate between SpaceX and Boeing for taxi flights, beginning next year. The backup pilot for this test flight, Mike Fincke, will strap in for Starliner's next trip.

"When you have a new spacecraft, you need to learn all about it and this has been a great exercise," Fincke told reporters late last week.

Image: Jin Liwang

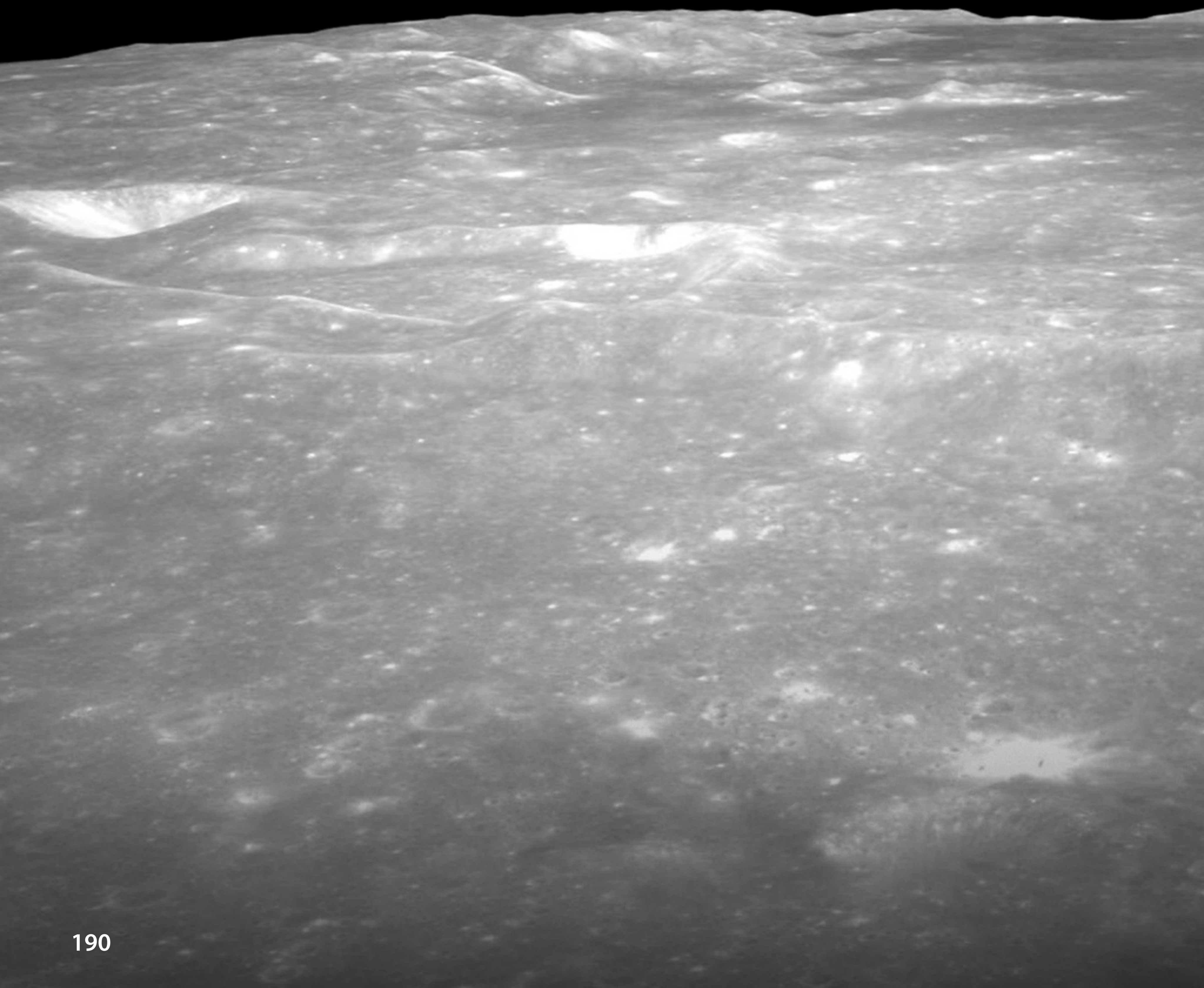
CHINA LANDS A SPACECRAFT ON THE MOON'S FAR SIDE TO COLLECT ROCKS FOR STUDY

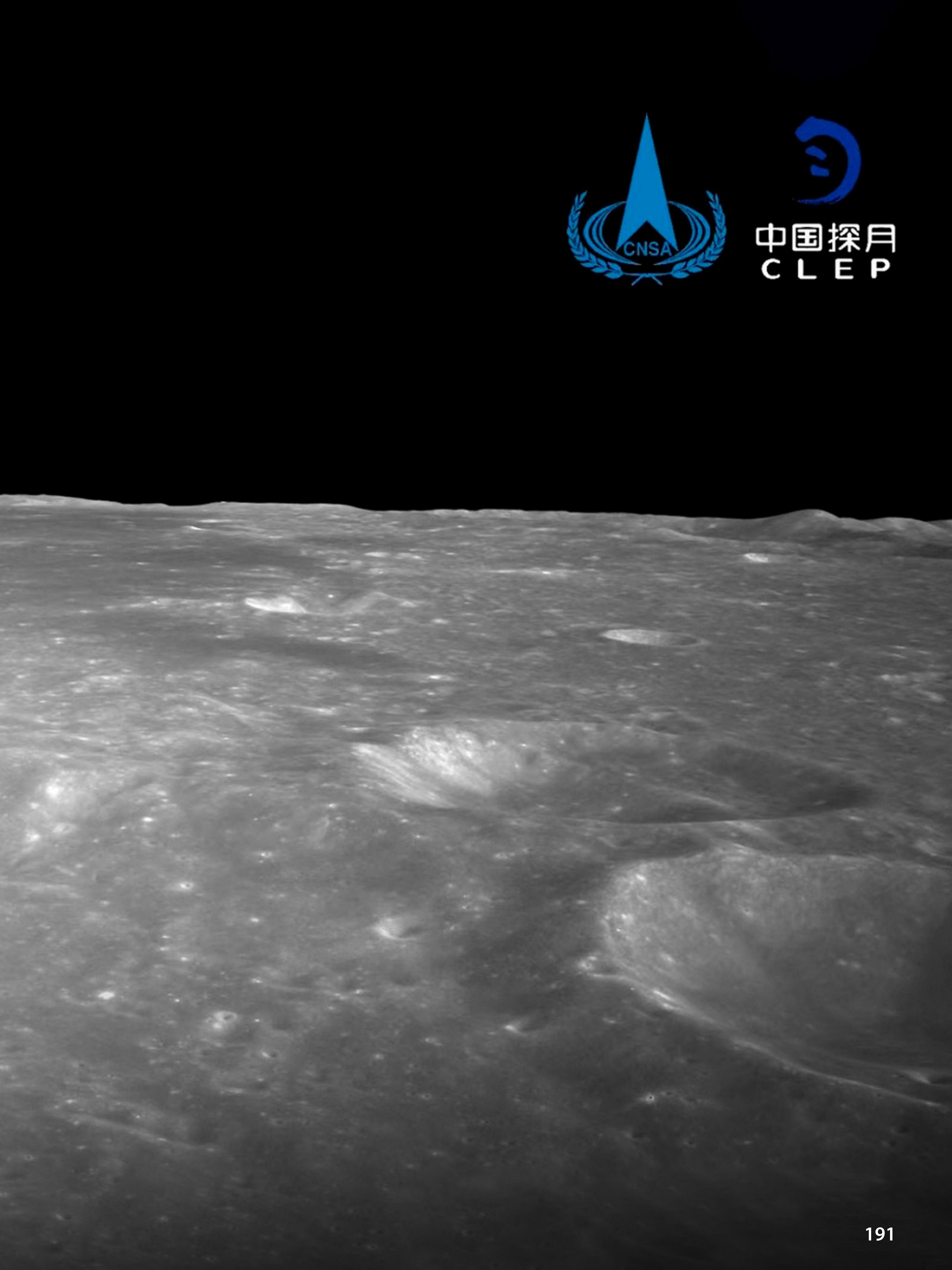
A Chinese spacecraft landed on the far side of the moon Sunday (02) to collect soil and rock samples that could provide insights into differences between the less-explored region and the better-known near side.

The landing module touched down at 6:23 a.m. Beijing time in a huge crater known as the South Pole-Aitken Basin, the China National Space Administration said.

The mission is the sixth in the Chang'e moon exploration program, which is named after a Chinese moon goddess. It is the second designed to bring back samples, following the Chang'e 5, which did so from the near side in 2020.

See China's Chang'e-6 land on far side of the moon in descent imagery time-lapse




CNSA
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The moon program is part of a growing rivalry with the U.S. — still the leader in space exploration — and others, including Japan and India. China has put its own space station in orbit and regularly sends crews there.

The emerging global power aims to put a person on the moon before 2030, which would make it the second nation after the United States to do so. America is planning to land astronauts on the moon again — for the first time in more than 50 years — though NASA pushed the target date back to 2026 earlier this year.

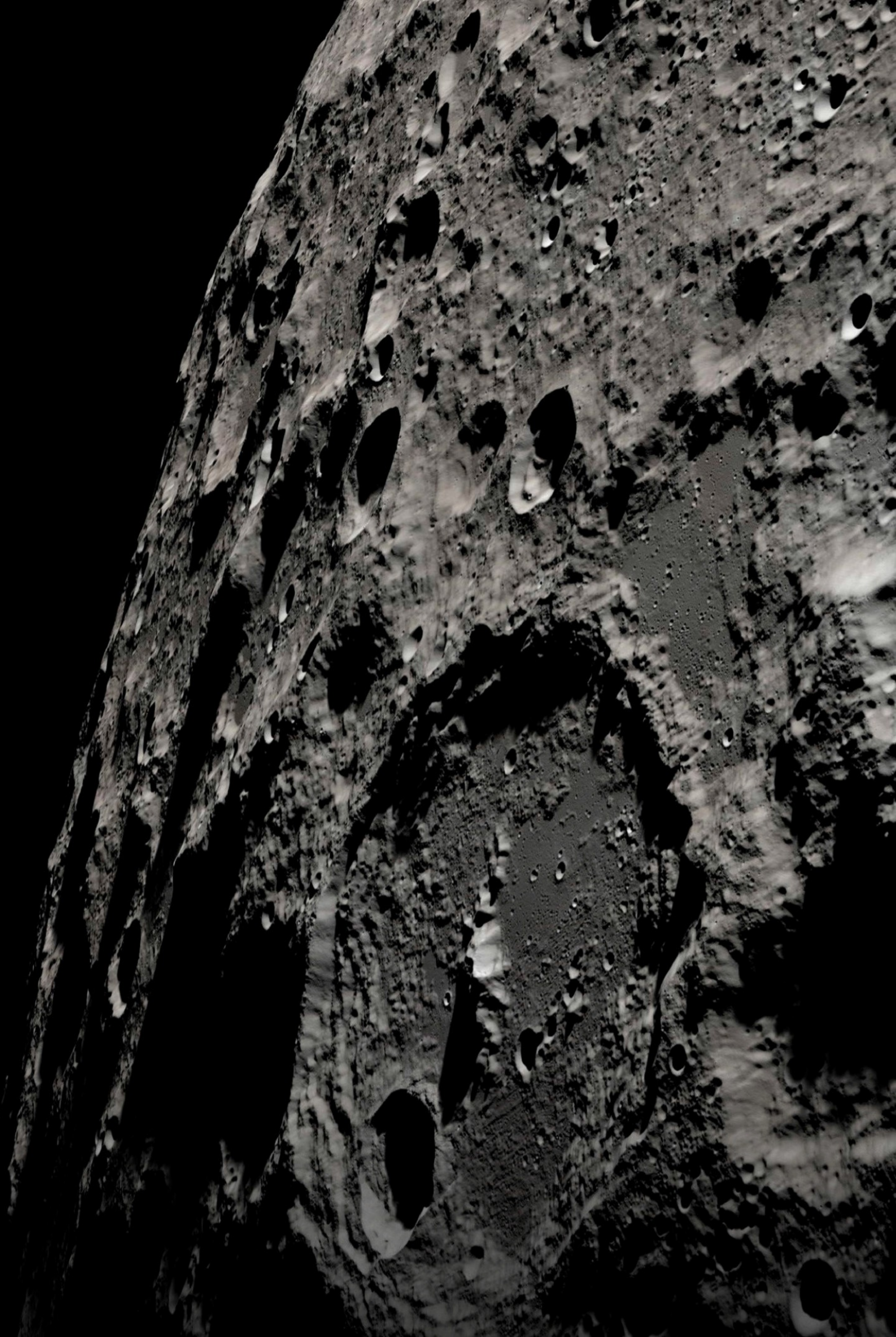
U.S. efforts to use private-sector rockets to launch spacecraft have been repeatedly delayed. Last-minute computer trouble nixed the planned launch of Boeing's first astronaut flight Saturday (01).

Earlier Saturday, a Japanese billionaire called off his plan to orbit the moon because of uncertainty over the development of a mega rocket by SpaceX. NASA is planning to use the rocket to send its astronauts to the moon.

In China's current mission, the lander is to use a mechanical arm and a drill to gather up to 2 kilograms (4.4 pounds) of surface and underground material over about two days.

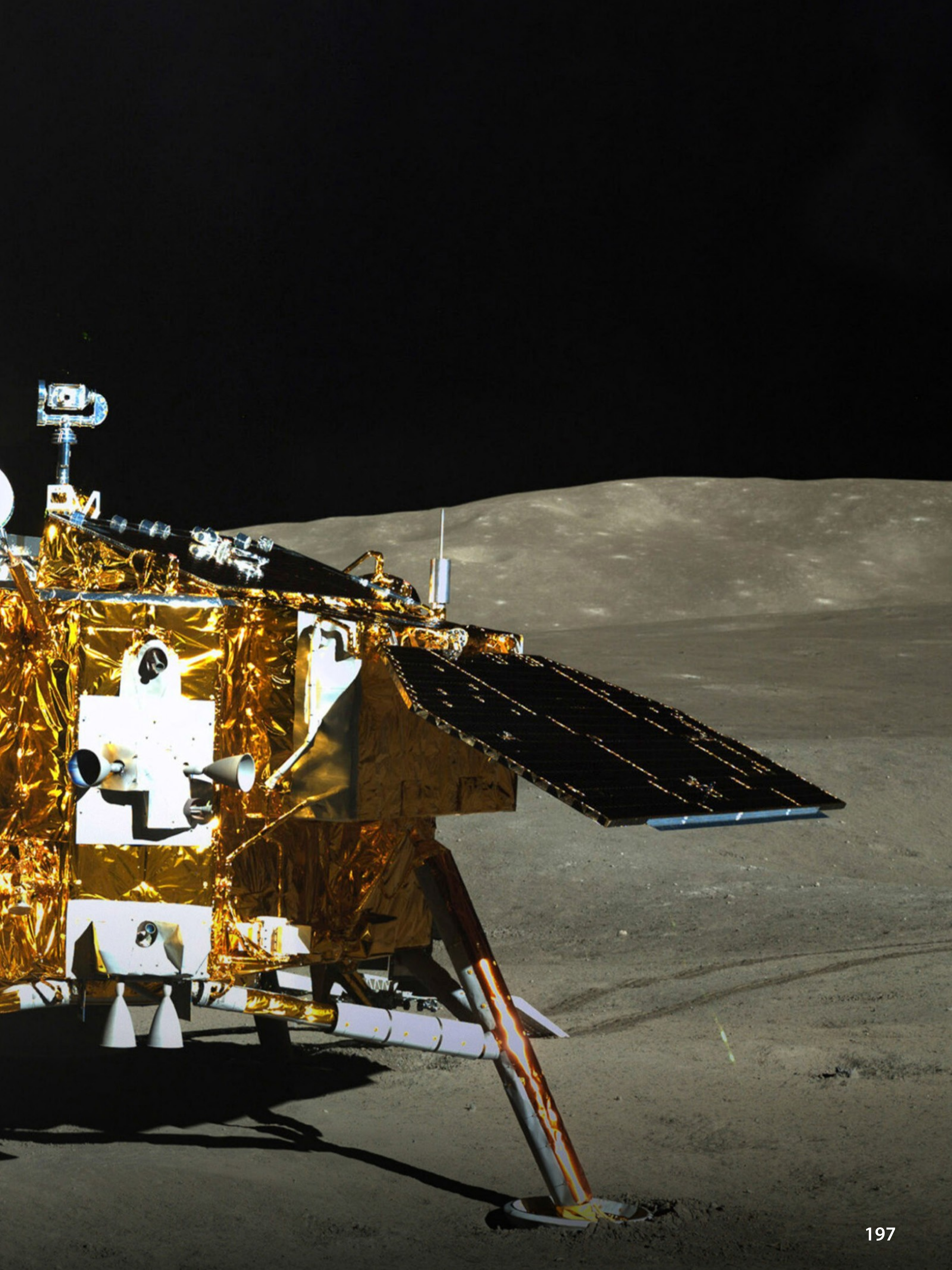
An ascender atop the lander will then take the samples in a metal vacuum container back to another module that is orbiting the moon. The container will be transferred to a reentry capsule that is due to return to Earth in the deserts of China's Inner Mongolia region about June 25.

Missions to the moon's far side are more difficult because it doesn't face the Earth, requiring a relay satellite to maintain communications. The terrain is also more rugged, with fewer flat areas to land.

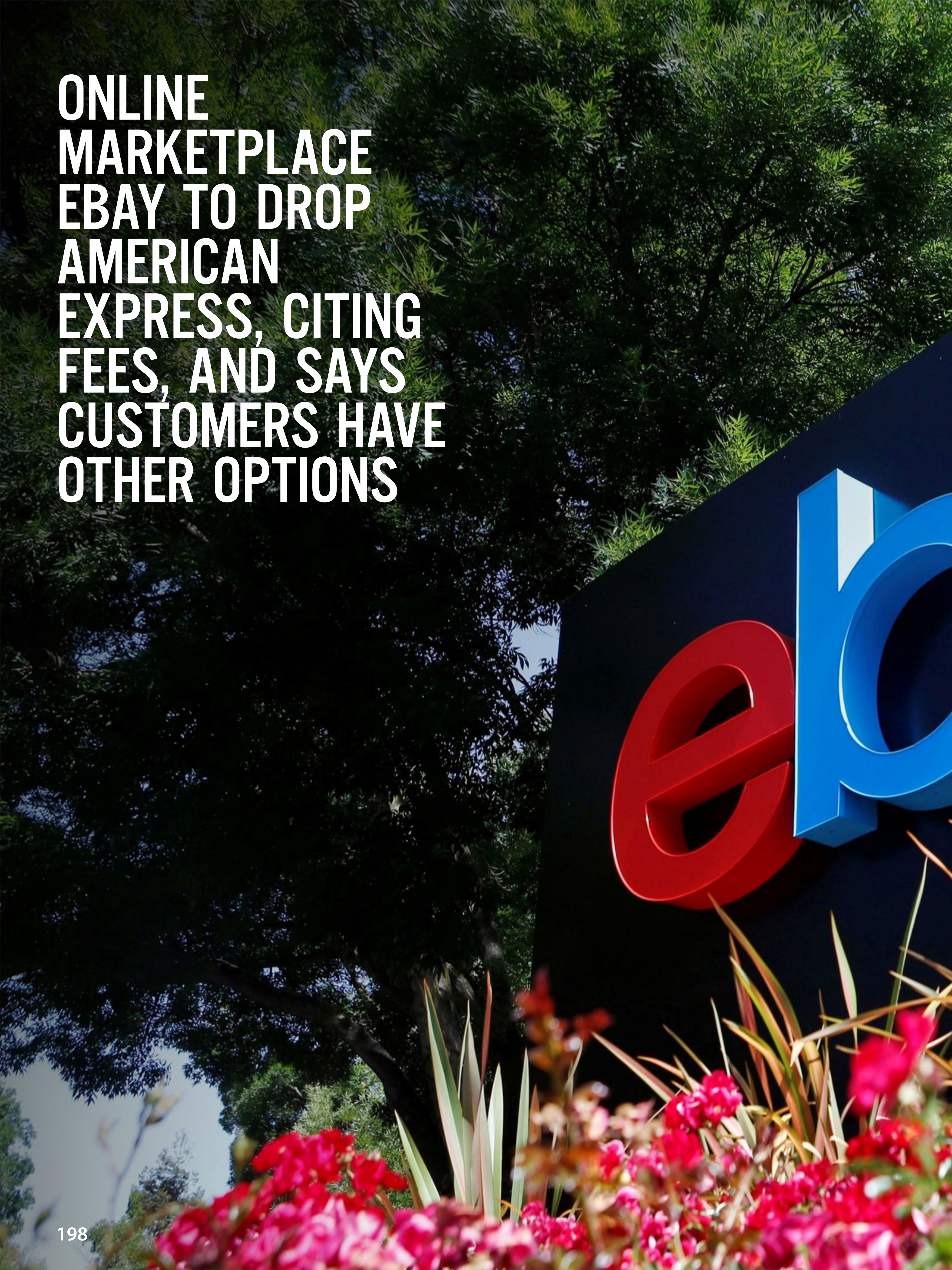


The South Pole-Aitken Basin, an impact crater created more than 4 billion years ago, is 13 kilometers (8 miles) deep and has a diameter of 2,500 kilometers (1,500 miles), according to a report by China's Xinhua News Agency.

It is the oldest and largest of such craters on the moon, so may provide the earliest information about it, Xinhua said, adding that the huge impact may have ejected materials from deep below the surface.



ONLINE MARKETPLACE EBAY TO DROP AMERICAN EXPRESS, CITING FEES, AND SAYS CUSTOMERS HAVE OTHER OPTIONS



ay

Online marketplace behemoth eBay said it plans to no longer accept American Express, citing what the company says are "unacceptably high fees" and that customers have other payment options to shop online.

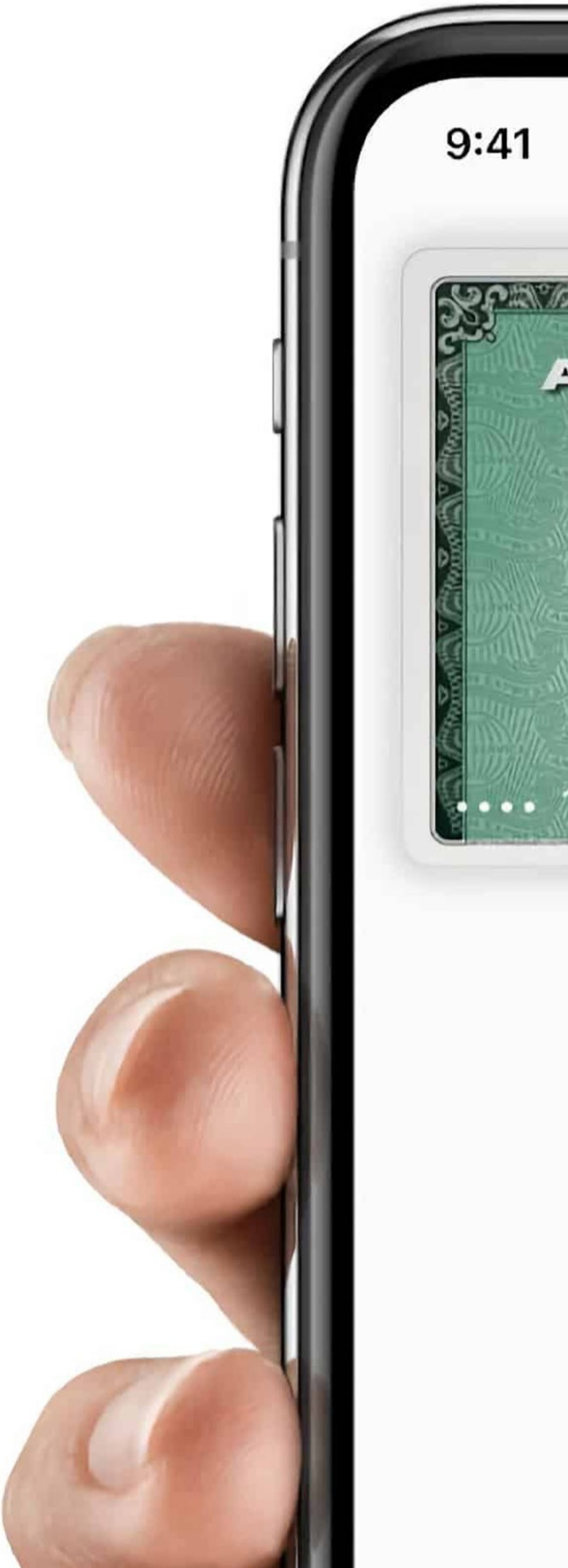
It's a notable blow to American Express, whose customers are often the most attractive among merchants and spend the most money per month on their cards. But it's not the first time merchants have voiced opposition to AmEx's business practices by walking away, most notably the warehouse chain Costco nearly a decade ago.

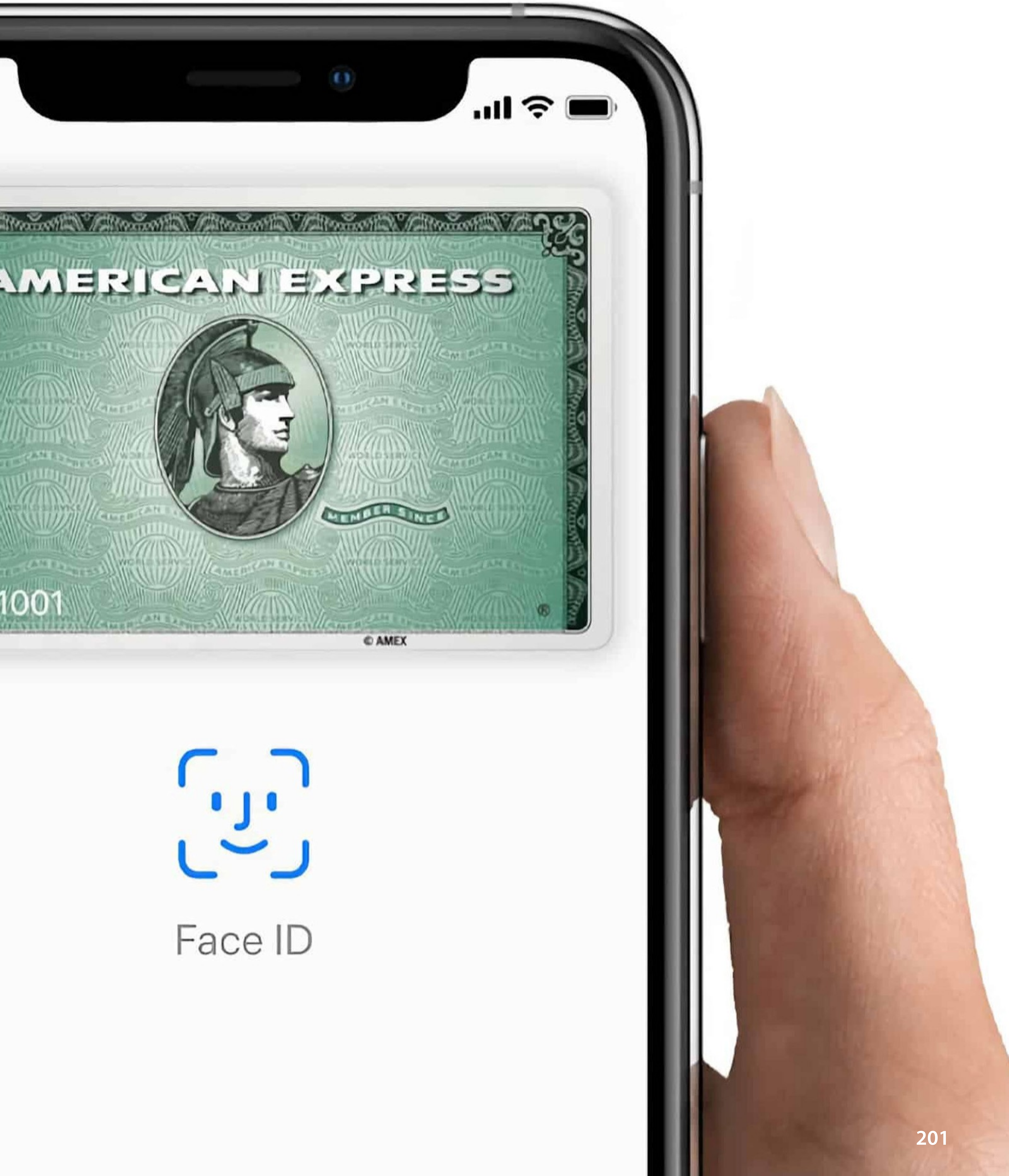
"After careful consideration, eBay has decided to no longer accept American Express globally effective Aug. 17 due to the unacceptably high fees American Express charges for processing credit card transactions," said eBay spokesman Scott Overland, in a statement.

Overland said that eBay customers have become aware of new ways to pay for items, making payments more competitive than ever before, and AmEx was no longer a necessary partner for eBay. eBay has increasingly been offering customers buy now, pay later options on purchases through Apple Pay, PayPal and other companies like Klarna and Affirm as well.

"We know that the vast majority of eBay customers are willing to use alternative payment options to continue enjoying buying and selling on our marketplace," Overland said.

Online merchants have become increasingly combative with payment processors in recent years over the fees they charge to accept payments. Amazon had a similar fight with Visa in the U.K. roughly two years ago, where Amazon

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Face ID

PayPal

threatened to drop Visa as a payment acceptance type over what it also called high fees.

Visa and Amazon eventually resolved their differences, and there was no disruption of service.

Like other payment processors, AmEx takes a percentage of each transaction a merchant processes on their network. The fee varies by industry, and the fees that the largest merchants pay are typically a closely guarded trade secret. The National Retail Federation says the average fee to accept a credit card is roughly 2% but can be as high as 4% on premium rewards credit cards like AmEx.

In a statement, American Express says that eBay's cost to accept AmEx cards is "comparable to what eBay pays for similar cards on other networks" and that AmEx cardmembers typically spend double at eBay what is spent on other networks.

"We find eBay's decision to drop American Express as a payment choice for consumers to be inconsistent with their stated desire to increase competition at the point of sale," said Adam Isserlis, a spokesman for AmEx.

AmEx has been on an aggressive campaign, under its current CEO Steve Squeri, to be a more universally accepted payment option across all merchants in an effort to combat the negative image that AmEx is less accepted and only available for its cardmembers for travel, dining, high-end shops or in dense urban areas. AmEx says its cards are now accepted at 99% of the places that Visa and Mastercard are accepted in the U.S., a metric it achieved in 2019.

But there have been setbacks along the way.

When Costco announced it would drop American Express in 2015, it was a major blow to AmEx since Costco represented roughly 10% of cardmember loans and roughly $80 billion in network volumes. It was also one of AmEx's most prominent partnerships.

Analysts at Keefe, Bruyette & Woods estimate that eBay may represent roughly 0.5% of AmEx's worldwide network volume and it's unlikely that AmEx will budge much on pricing with eBay.

Pay

TECH NEWS SITE GIZMODO SOLD FOR THIRD TIME IN 8 YEARS AS EUROPEAN PUBLISHER KELEOPS LOOKS TO EXPAND

GIZMO
iPhone 3G
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Longtime technology news and review site Gizmodo has been sold for the third time in the past eight years, this time to a European publisher looking to expand its coverage of the digital scene.

Switzerland-based Keleops didn't disclose how much it paid for Gizmodo in its Tuesday announcement of the deal. Gizmodo was part of a $135 million deal in 2016 when Univision Communications bought its previous owner, Gawker Media, after that company filed for bankruptcy in the fallout from a losing legal battle with former professional wrestler Hulk Hogan.

Univision subsequently sold Gizmodo and the satirical publication The Onion to Boston investment firm Great Hill Partners in 2019 at what was believed to be a fraction of the price paid in the 2016 deal. Great Hill formed G/O Media to oversee Gizmodo and other websites

In a staff memo, G/O Media CEO Jim Spanfelle said Gizmodo was sold for substantially more this time than the price paid to Univision in 2019, without providing any specifics.

"This and other increases in valuation stand as strong testament to the work of not only our editorial teams but also the core other areas of our operations," wrote Spanfelle, who said the deal includes a commitment to keep Gizmodo's staff intact.

G/O Media recently sold The Onion to tech executive Jeff Lawson, who became a billionaire after founding online business software provider Twilio.

Lawson is asking Onion readers to donate $1 to help support it financially. Keleops CEO Jean-

Guillaume Kleis, who founded his company a decade ago, plans to carry out a more traditional business strategy by leveraging the brand and reputation that Gizmodo has built during its more than 20 years tracking technology.

“The combination of Keleops’ unique digital know-how and Gizmodo’s rich content and deep editorial expertise will greatly benefit both our audiences and our partners,” Kleis predicted in a statement.

New York-based Gizmodo attracted worldwide attention in 2010 after buying an early prototype of Apple’s iPhone 4 that Apple’s late co-founder contended was stolen. Jobs, who died in 2011, also accused Gizmodo of trying to extort Apple to get the device back, resulting in an apology from a Gizmodo editor. Local prosecutors in Silicon Valley did not file charges in that caper.

CLIMATE SOLUTION: MASSACHUSETTS TOWN EXPERIMENTS WITH COMMUNITY HEATING AND COOLING

Jennifer and Eric Mauchan live in a Cape Cod-style house in Framingham, Massachusetts that they've been cooling with five air conditioners. In the summer, the electric bill for the 2,600-square-foot home can be $200.

In the winter, heating with natural gas is often more than $300 a month, even with the temperature set at 65 degrees Fahrenheit (18 degrees Celsius).

"My mom, when she was alive, wouldn't come to our house in the wintertime," because it was too cold, Eric Mauchan said.

Their neighborhood is now part of a pilot climate solution that connects 37 homes and businesses with a highly-efficient, underground heating and cooling system. Even taking into account that several of the buildings will be switching from natural gas to electricity, people are expected to see their electric bills drop by 20% on average. It's a model some experts say can be scaled up and replicated elsewhere.

"As soon as they told me about it, I bought in 100%," said Jennifer Mauchan, who works in finance, remembering her first meeting with representatives from Eversource, the gas and electric utility that installed the system. "From a financial perspective, I thought that it was a very viable option for us." She cited lower greenhouse gases that cause climate change as an important factor in the decision.

Gina Richard, owner of Corner Cabinet, a kitchen and bath cabinet showroom in Framingham, said she felt "pretty lucky" to be part of the project. She currently uses two air conditioners and two heaters and looks forward to replacing all that with a single system. Richard said she

NO PARKING

BALTIMORE
20
RUNNING FESTIVAL

was told she could see her winter heating bill of $900-1,000 go down by as much as a third, which she said would be "amazing."

The Framingham system consists of a giant underground loop filled with water and antifreeze, similar to the way gas is delivered to several houses in a neighborhood. Water in the loop absorbs heat from underground, which remains at about 55 degrees Fahrenheit (13 degrees Celsius) all year.

Households have their own heat pump units that provide heating and air conditioning, installed by the utility. These take heat from the loop, spike the temperature further, and release that heat as warm air into the homes. For air conditioning, heat is extracted from the home or business and released into the Earth or transported to the next home.

The energy sharing works best when some buildings are drawing on heat while another needs it, the way a grocery store needs to keep its cases refrigerated even in winter.

Other networked geothermal projects exist in the U.S., including the Texas community of Whisper Valley and Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. Eversource says this is the first utility-led installation in the U.S. If it works, that could be important because an individual homeowner could not do the digging and drilling necessary to create a neighborhood system.

Right now, homeowners can buy individual air source heat pumps, which have become common and are efficient. Or they can drill for more expensive, even more efficient ground source heat pumps. Incentives, such as those in the Inflation Reduction Act or local utilities, help lower the price on these, yet the final cost can still be tens of thousands of dollars.

Framingham beat out other communities that applied to Eversource to become pilot sites. The city 20 minutes west of Boston is surrounded by Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, plus firms like Thermo Fisher Scientific, Pfizer and Novartis. Eric Mauchan said the proximity of so much advanced technology and a state law requiring that greenhouse gas emissions ramp down to zero by 2050 helped make the community receptive.

Nikki Bruno, vice president for clean technologies for Eversource, also cited the state's emissions law as a reason for the pilot. It was also "an opportunity from a decarbonization standpoint," she said, because Eversource has its own net zero goal.

"We're thinking about, okay, we do this pilot now, how can we scale this into a sustainable business model, into a sustainable program to offer in more locations?" she said.

Jack DiEnna, founder of the Geothermal National & International Initiative, an alliance of industry professionals, said utilities are seeing pressure to address climate change plus incentives to do so. Ground source heat pumps are highly efficient, reduce the electricity demand on the grid and can be installed in regions beyond the reach of gas lines. They also cool homes and release very little in the way of climate pollution compared to traditional heaters and air conditioners.

There is also an equity issue that concerns some in the climate and energy sector. If people who

EVERSOURCE
ENERGY
107 Selden Street

have the means disconnect their natural gas, it could have unequal consequences for people.

It "means that the people who can least afford it are stuck paying for this gas system, this very leaky gas system," said Ania Camargo, thermal energy networks manager at the Building Decarbonization Coalition, a nonprofit working to eliminate fossil fuels from buildings.

"One of the reasons why I advocate for utilities to be a big part of the solution is because it's a way to make sure we can do this for everybody."

Back at the Mauchans' home, the couple laughs about the accommodations they were making to their old heating system. "I was so mindful of the expense that we would incur if we increased the temperature to, God forbid, 70 degrees in the winter," Jennifer recalled about letting the house get cold in winter.

They expect their new heat pump to change things. "I mean, we'll keep our house 71 degrees all year long," Eric said.

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CONTACTS

Executive Director - ceo@techlifenewsmagazine.com
Relationship Management - crm@techlifenewsmagazine.com
Editor - editor@techlifenewsmagazine.com
Advertise - ads@techlifenewsmagazine.com
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Graphic Production Coordinator

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